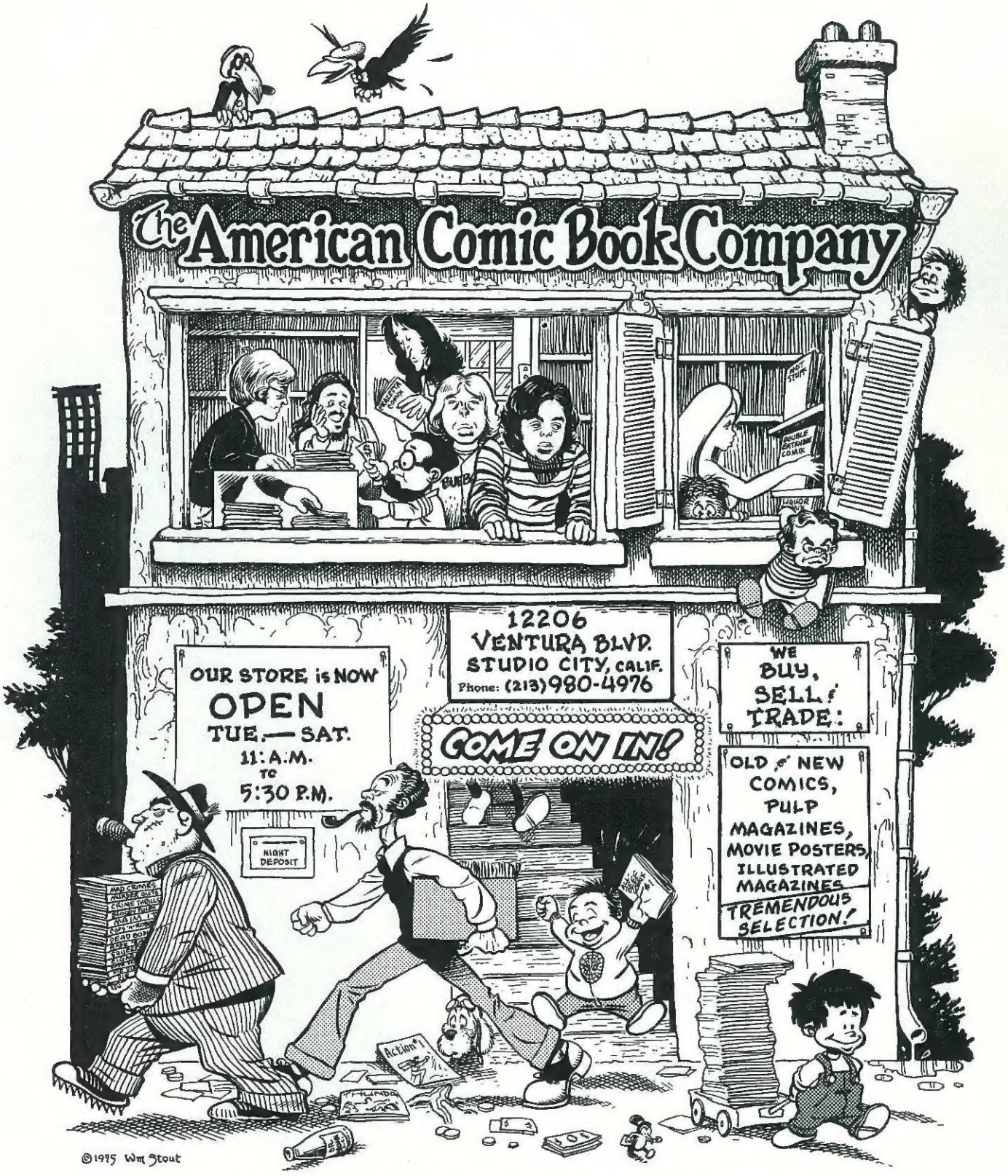
Number One Spring 1977 • $2.00

Fanfare

THE MAGAZINE OF POPULAR CULTURE AND ALL THE ARTS

FORMERLY GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE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COME ON IN!
WE
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PULP
MAGAZINES,
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SELECTION!
HOT STUFF
DOUBLE EXTREME COMICS
LIQUOR
Action!
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Editorial

Throughout the world there are countless devotees of popular art in all its forms, a pastime that can regulate our daily lives and leave a lasting impression. Many of us become students of the media, our activities shaped by forces that reach us under the label of entertainment. Movies, plays, books, magazines, television, radio, records, comic books, newspaper strips, animation. If you share with us an interest in any of these and associated areas, we think you'll find *Fanfare* worth a look.

We don't guarantee you'll like every feature in every issue. We do guarantee a magazine that addresses itself to the whole range of entertainment arts with appeal to the avid buff, the historian, the special interest enthusiast, the casual reader. Such a format runs the risk of being called, perish forbid, the dreaded something-for-everyone hodgepodge. We'd rather class it under the general heading of Popular Culture, for want of a better term, where neighboring categories can be represented, sometimes for contrasting points of view.

Fanfare is not a magazine of media news, nostalgia or show biz gossip. Our territory is open-ended enough to include articles, essays, interviews and departments from the wildly popular to the obscurely esoteric. If we do things on the past, we'll also do things on the present. And don't be surprised if we take a look at some aspects of the future. Our main concern is that pop subjects be treated not as junk art suddenly granted pretentious and faddish recognition, but as topics deserving of our energies to produce and your time to read. Nothing will be dismissed as trivial because it serves only to entertain the widest possible audience, or ignored because it isn't popular enough. The article thought far-fetched or long overdue might be in this issue or could appear in the next.

Fanfare has evolved from the erstwhile *Graphic Story Magazine,* a format devoted primarily to comic books. See Fanfare Forum on page 58 for a stirring account of that metamorphosis. While continuing to cover the creators and creations of the comic book world, we've also opened the way for an almost unlimited amount of other material. Suggestions for features are not only welcomed, they're actively solicited. Writers are invited to submit proposals. The contents of this issue and coming attractions show what we're looking for, but, if your idea can extend and develop our depth of coverage, contact us about it.

That's what *Fanfare's* approach to the popular arts is all about, and that's what we hope you'll be enjoying, along with us, in issues to come.

Bill Spicer Mark Evanier

Number One Spring 1977 - $2.00

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THE MAGAZINE OF POPULAR CULTURE AND ALL THE ARTS

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Short Subjects

Walter Winchell and the Great EC Raid

Old enemies and new came forward to combat the "menace" of Walter Winchell. He was prepared to do battle with them all.

Lyle Stuart, like many young newspapermen of the 1930s and 1940s, idolized Winchell as the epitome of the fearless reporter. He wrote Winchell fan letters, later contributed columns on freedom of the press and other matters to Winchell; two press agents employed Stuart to supply the material.

In 1951, Stuart launched a tabloid sheet called Exposé. During his service with International News Service and Variety, he noted that some of the best writing remained in reporters' desks because no one dared print the stories. He vowed that Exposé would report the truth without restraint.

His first issue made little impression. He was searching about for subjects to expose in the second Exposé when he picked up a copy of the Mirror. After siding with Billingsley in the Josephine Baker imbroglio, Winchell had begun printing an occasional joke with sly racial overtones. In one of them Pearl Bailey was purported to have attended a fancy party and put on airs with the Negro maid. The maid's answer: "Honey, why don't yo' talk like yo' is?"

Stuart was outraged. This was the same Winchell who three years before had conducted a relentless campaign against dialect comedians. He called them "vomics." One teller of Jewish jokes, Myron Cohen, protested that much of his material came from what Winchell himself had printed as Mefoofsky jokes. Winchell would not be dissuaded, and some comedians lost their livelihood because they were considered "vomics."

Stuart decided to make Walter Winchell the target of his second issue of Exposé.

He devoted eleven columns of the tabloid to his version of the Winchell saga, raking over all the old scandals and a few new ones as well. Stuart printed a few matters that hadn't been covered in the more polite journals: Winchell's reliance on press agents, his extramarital romances.

In anticipation of heavy sales, Stuart sank his entire wealth in ten thousand copies of Exposé, ten times his original issue. He delivered them to the newsdealers' union, where they somehow became ruined in a bath of mimeograph ink. Stuart borrowed money to print more; this time he delivered the copies to newsstands himself.

Within a few hours the Winchell issue of Exposé had sold more copies at a 42nd Street newsstand than the entire sales of the first issue. Within days, ninety thousand papers had been sold.

It was impossible for Winchell to ignore the attack. His personal code demanded an answer to any criticism of Walter Winchell, no matter what the source, and despite the advice of his associates that such retaliation only brought attention to the criticism and made celebrities of those who spoke against him.

Information on Stuart was fed to Winchell. He delighted in printing the fact that Stuart had pleaded guilty to an attempted extortion at the age of nineteen. (Stuart declared he had been tricked into it by a con man.) Winchell's friends in the police department helped the campaign. Stuart was business manager for a publisher of comic books; police raided the office and arrested Stuart on grounds the comic books were obscene.

"Attention all newsstands!" Winchell announced. "Anyone selling the filth of Lyle Stuart will be subject to the same arrest!"

One day Stuart stepped out of his home in North Bergen, New Jersey, and was blackjacked unconscious by three men. Stuart identified two of his assailants in a police lineup; waterfront thugs, they were convicted of assault. Like Barry Gray, Stuart never accused Winchell of having anything to do with the beating. But it was easy to see how a hoodlum might have ordered the assault to ingratiate himself with the columnist.

Winchell maintained his campaign of calumny, and Stuart waited. Finally his chance came. One night on television Winchell displayed a copy of a scandal magazine that featured an attack on Stuart. "Read about this rat!" Winchell commanded.

Stuart sued. With the $21,500 he won in the libel suit, he established his own business as a book publisher.

From *Winchell*,
©1971 by Bob Thomas

THANK YOU FOR YOUR NOTE! IT'LL HELP US IN CHOOSING THE KIND OF STORIES YOU WANT US TO PUBLISH!
I'M DOING A PRIVATE-EYE STORY!
I'M ON A PRIVATEER!
NOW I WANT A GOOD, CLEAN JOB!
HEY, JOE! HOW ARE THE BOOKS GOING ON MARS?
B Kaigalion
SMITH
LYLE STUART
REED CRANDALL

A SOBER THOUGHT

Some Symptoms of a TVaholic

WASHINGTON (UPI)—With tongue in cheek, Nicholas Johnson, chairman of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, says television can be just as addictive as alcohol.

The answers to these 10 questions, he says, will help determine if you are TV addict:

1—Do you turn down the set when you answer the phone so the caller won't know you're watching television?

2—Do you stay up late watching television, but can't remember the next morning what you saw?

3—Do you have to watch a television program as soon as you get up in the morning?

4—Do you suddenly find you have watched several programs in a row without thinking about it?

5—When you have visitors, do you find it impossible to turn off the set or to carry on a conversation without continuing to watch?

6—If unexpected visitors come, do you rush to turn the channel to a "better" program?

7—Did you refuse a social engagement because you didn't want to miss a program, but were ashamed to tell anyone that was the reason?

8—If you try to go through an evening without television, do you become nervous and irritable? Do you have trouble figuring out what to do with your eyes?

9—When other people say you're watching too much television, do you become defensive?

10—Do you find yourself saying, "I never watch TV, but I just happened to turn the set on the other night and . . ."?

©Advertising Age, October 11, 1976

Beals rejoins Speedy

By NILES HOWARD

ELKHART, IND.—Speedy Alka-Seltzer came home for a day last week. He arose early and sat through interviews with two local newspaper reporters. At 10 he went on a local tv talk show. At 11 he stood for pictures with a four-ft. plastic model of Speedy. At noon he plopped down in a booth in the Ramada Inn with two pr men from Miles Laboratories and a reporter from ADVERTISING AGE and ate a hot dog.

"I was hoping for this kind of reception," he said. "They have always treated me like a member of the family. The last time I was here I signed 3,000 autographs."

That was in 1958 when Speedy was at the height of his popularity, when he was peddling 7,000,000 Alka-Seltzer tablets a day for Miles Labs. Six years later he was quietly retired. But now he's back on tv and he couldn't be happier. He said: "I'm in ecstasy."

■ Speedy's real name is Richard Beals. He is 49½ years old and lives in Escondido, Cal., where he has run an ad agency under his own name for six years. When he sits on a restaurant bench his feet dangle like those of a boy fishing off a pier. He is 4 ft., 6" tall. His shoes shine, his plaid suit is perfectly tailored and his smile seems so familiar that it's easy to forget that this man only supplies the voice to a puppet; his face has never appeared in a tv commercial. Dick Beals *looks* like Speedy Alka-Seltzer. Even more remarkable is his voice. "I think it has gotten just a little heavier," he observed. But to a tv listener no change is apparent. It still sounds seven years old.

In 1952, when he was 24 years old, he left Detroit, where he had been doing children's radio parts for "The Lone Ranger" and "Challenge of the Yukon." Such parts were not plentiful, and so he went to Hollywood to cash in on the growing animation business.

Three weeks after he arrived he called on the local office of Wade Advertising looking for work. Dick Beals won't forget that day: "The man in the office said, 'I wish you'd been here a few weeks ago. We had just the part for you.' But auditions were over. He called back a few days later and said come on in anyway. We would send a recording to Chicago and see what happened.

What a relief it is: Dick Beals and plastic Speedy reunite in Indiana.

"All I had was this sheet of words to the song. I had no accompaniment. The director just told me it was to the tune 'Alouette'." He sang:

"Alka-Seltzer,
Speedy Alka-Seltzer.
Got a headache?
Take it for relief."

In 11 years he made more than 100 commercials for Alka-Seltzer. He would go to the studio and sing. Later, the animators would study the sound track and make Speedy's mouth move accordingly. One day Dick Beals watched them "They had a different head for each vowel and each consonant. There are 24 frames a second, and so they would make 24 changes. It took 1,440 changes of that head to make a one-minute spot."

■ Between spots he found off-camera jobs in radio shows, commercials and cartoons. "I did anything from a baby to a child up to 14 or 15 years old." For Hanna Barbera Productions he did the voice of Oscar Mayer's Little Oscar. He did the Campbell kids (both of them) for Campbell soup.

Later he was a regular on the Flintstones when it was a prime time cartoon series. He did mostly children. "On one show they had five boy scouts and I was all five."

The fact that he was Speedy was not publicized, and few of his friends knew. "All those years it never appeared in print," he said. "The company wanted it that way and that was just fine with me. I never wanted notoriety."

■ One day in 1964 he read that Wade Advertising had lost the Alka-Seltzer account. The new agency was Jack Tinker & Partners of New York. "Then I got a letter from them saying they were going to stop using [Speedy] on a trial basis." The new agency preferred more dramatic shots of people's upset stomachs. "It meant a change for me. I loved the voice. It was a sad day."

Last fall, Alka-Seltzer began a new ad campaign with a catchy tune. It went:

"Plop plop fizz fizz
Oh, what a relief it is."

Dick Beals heard it on tv. He thought it was a natural song for Speedy. A few months later he had a dream. "I dreamed I got a call from New York." The next day the phone rang. It was Alka-Seltzer's latest agency, Wells, Rich, Greene.

■ "They said, 'Can you go to Hollywood and do a scratch [test] tape?' It was like a dream come true. I said, 'Oh, my goodness, I'll be there an hour early'." A few weeks later he was in New York. The recording session went as smoothly as ever. "I was in at 10, out at 11." Speedy was back in the can.

So far only one commercial has been made and shown and Miles says it's undecided about Speedy's future. But Speedy has learned to take things as they come. "Fifteen years ago if you had asked me whether to bring him back I would have said, Oh, yeah! But now I'm in marketing and I say, if it sells, do it. I won't say do Speedy just because it's Speedy. I want what's best for the company. I'd do anything for this company."

The Kildare Affair

Years ago, when the Dr. Kildare TV series starring Richard Chamberlain went off, King Features Syndicate kept the comic strip of the same name going. And artist Ken Bald continued to draw Jim Kildare in Chamberlain's image. Then, in 1973, a syndicated series called Young Doctor Kildare made the rounds starring Mark Jenkins, not as the barely-experienced resident, Dr. Kildare, but as the wholly-inexperienced intern, Dr. Kildare.

Since the Chamberlain series was taken out of rerun, so as not to conflict with the new Jenkins show, King Features decided to alter their comic strip to fit the new Jim Kildare. And so, one day in November of 1973, the comic strip Kildare suddenly underwent a startling metamorphosis. Without explanation he was suddenly an intern again and, overnight, he apparently performed major facial surgery on himself and got rid of his elevator shoes. One day he looked like Richard Chamberlain, the next day he looked like Mark Jenkins. This all took place right in the middle of a story and all of the supporting characters were too polite to make mention of it. Wise old Doc Gillespie did not change to fit his new TV image, however. That would have been stretching credibility a mite, don't you think?

Here's where it really gets confusing: The new Kildare show flopped and vanished, never to be seen again, and so the old show (with Chamberlain) was reinstated in syndication. Yes, you guessed right—in May of 1975, Jim Kildare (Mark Jenkins version) was attempting to cure a stoned-out hippie of amnesia. The befuddled lad finally saw a birthday party in progress and that jarred his memory. Just at that point in the story, Dr. Kildare suddenly grew four inches, became a resident again and turned back into Richard Chamberlain—none of which fazed the amnesia victim who was still getting over the shock of seeing a birthday party. Is that clear? No? Well, let's try it again:

First, he looked like Richard Chamberlain and then, suddenly and with no explanation, he looked like Mark Jenkins and was demoted to intern. Then, in 1975, they changed him back to look like Chamberlain and made him a resident again. Now, have you got it? No? Well, then you can imagine how poor Ken Bald must feel. If his head didn't match his name before, it does now. □

Richard Chamberlain version

Mark Jenkins version

Earth Shoe idea born in San Antonio in '50s

To the Editor: It's high time someone spoke out against Anne Kalso (AA, March 31, P. 3) and her shrill insistence that she invented the so-called Earth Shoe.

Who can forget the Zoot Suit shoe worn by the pachuco of the 1950s that was also meant to lower the center of gravity? The "pachuco" in west and south San Antonio found that this stylish shoe with a built-up leather sole and low heel was an effective "flying-kick" weapon that makes David Carradine look awkward.

Los Vatos Locos (the crazy guys) in my neighborhood would take a brand new pair of tan-colored Stacy-Adams or Florsheim shoes down to Pablo's Shoe Repair and Dry Cleaners on Culebra Road in San Antonio. The guy would then instruct Pablo to install some "negative gravity soles and heels" to his specifications, with an explicit request that the white stitching around the soles be kept intact.

Now here was a case of a true marketer's dream. Here was a product born of direct consumer demand. This product involved the consumer on the production side.

Plus, every time one guy bought a pair, the guy down the street had to buy a pair in *self defense!* (Push-pull marketing?)

Rey Lopez,
Phoenix.

©1976 Advertising Age

« TELEVISION PROGRESS »

WITH 1939, television finally seems about to take the first of a series of rapid strides toward actual country-wide communication service, and eventually take its place along with radio as a means of recreation. It is the general agreement of most experts that television will never be as popular as radio, as a means of home entertainment, due to the difficulty of observation, and the necessity of constant and close attention. Relaxing as we do now to radio programs, sprawled all over the parlor furniture, will be impossible. We'll have to sit up and keep our attention focused on a comparatively small area, which is tiring.

However, quite a few large cities today are sending out television broadcasts, or telecasts. New York, with its NBC television transmitter, is leading the parade. The latest television station is in the Helderberg Hills, about twelve miles outside of Schenectady, New York. More are being planned every day. Options on all tall buildings in large cities are rapidly being taken up, with NBC leading the parade. For instance, options on the tallest Chicago buildings are held at the present moment, with other companies waiting for final decision as to which building is to be used, so that they may obtain the others.

New tubes and other developments are becoming daily announcements, and progress is beginning to gather in a rolling wave of achievement. Nor will home receivers be any more expensive than an ordinary radio. Technical difficulties there have been ironed out, and production is merely a matter of getting the broadcast expenses reduced to the point where numerous stations become practical. Naturally, it is to be seen that there would be no sense to starting full speed production of receivers, which awaits only the go ahead signal, without first settling the problem of broadcast stations.

But the day isn't far off now. The country-wide television that science fiction authors have predicted in AMAZING STORIES seems certain to be an accomplished fact by 1945. Some experts even predict this in less time. It begins to look as though the prophetic writers had better begin looking for a new subject to forecast.

AMAZING STORIES, April 1939

"I Can't Afford To Be SKINNY"

Says Glamorous Actress
RAQUEL WELCH

Being introduced in Reno Carell's "A SWINGIN' SUMMER"

Starring James Stacy, William Wellman Jr., and Quinn O'Hara—A RENO CARELL-NTC Production, United Screen Arts Release

"Movie and Television film making in Hollywood, while exciting and rewarding, also means a relentless day after day grind of long hours from early morning until late at night. Often we skip lunch and dinner and so, I often rely on Wate-On Emulsions and Wate-On Tablets, as meal-time supplements and for their source of weight sustaining calories. All forms of pleasant tasting Wate-On are super concentrated with calories, vitamins, minerals, energy elements and other body building nutrients. So, if you are thin, skinny and underweight because of poor appetite or poor eating habits, ask your doctor about the value of Wate-On for you. It could just be that maybe the boys won't be calling you 'skinny' any more."

Raquel Welch

DON'T YOU BE SKINNY!

If you are diagnosed thin, skinny and underweight because of poor eating habits and not disease, take WATE-ON as directed. Extra rich in weight building calories plus vitamins, minerals, energy elements and body building nutrients. Wate-On puts on pounds and inches of firm solid flesh or money back. Fast weight gains averaging 9 pounds reported. Helps fill out bust-line, cheeks, arms, legs and helps put on weight all over the body. If underweight is due to disease take Wate-On under direction of your doctor. Wate-On comes in these pleasant, easy-to-take forms:

NEW SUPER-WATE-ON Homogenized Liquid Emulsion
Strawberry - Butterscotch - Banana Flavors, Pint $4.00

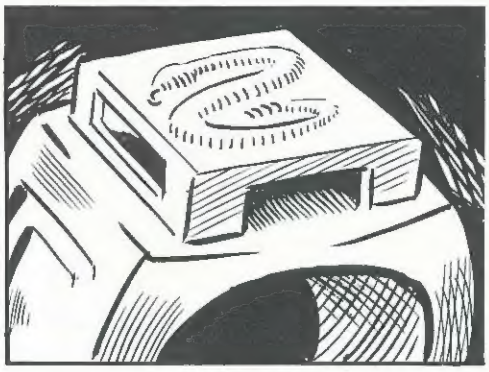
WATE-ON Homogenized Liquid Emulsion
Blue Label—Pint...$3.00 Quart...$5.50

WATE-ON TABLETS
Strawberry-Butterscotch-Banana Flavors. Box of 96 Tablets...$3.00
Box of 192 Tablets...$5.50

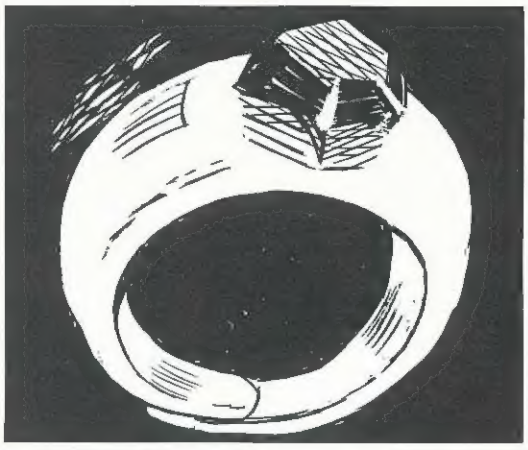
ASK YOUR DRUGGIST FOR
WATE-ON

SCREEN STORIES, August 1965

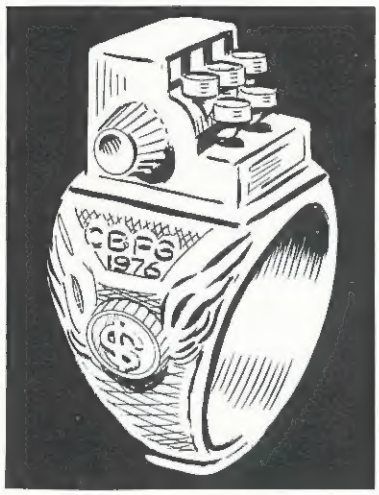
A TREASURY OF SUPPRESSED PREMIUMS



THE MYSTIC VIENNESE SEE-BEHIND-YOU RING. Very rare. This giveaway was conceived and made in limited quantities by no less a figure than Sigmund Freud himself. Thanks to the mirror set at a 45-degree angle inside the ring's top, a paranoidal patient was enabled to see behind him, without turning his head, merely by lifting the ring to his eye. Not a true premium in the strict sense of the word (they didn't come in cereal boxes) it is nonetheless a highly desirable item. Suppressed by cereal manufacturers who purloined the idea for a giveaway in the 1940s. Collectors are advised to beware of these cheap imitations, identifiable by crossed six-guns in place of the serpent.



THE DEPLETED ENERGY RING. Not to be confused with the famous "Shadow" ring of the 1930s. This features not a lump of coal but a chunk of unrefined oil shale. Pretty messy, but you could leave your mark on things—your mother's towels, for instance. It was withdrawn after big eastern oil interests realized there was no point in giving away what you can sell. The few remaining copies are much in demand by third world delegates at the U.N. They like to flash them at U.S. and British delegates and snigger derisively. Not really a very desirable item anyway; it didn't even have the energy to glow in the dark.



THE COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE CALCULATOR RING. Similar to the famous Treasury Agent Ring offered by the Internal Revenue Service in the 1930s, this is the one they're all talking about. A marvel of the premium maker's art, it calculates the market value of any comic published between 1850 and the present. Simply tab in title, cover condition, number of pages missing, etc. Automatically adds 20% to any reasonable price. It's amazing what they're doing with calculators these days. Withdrawn from circulation after collectors discovered that with the ring they didn't need a Price Guide.

THE FRONTIER TOWN BORDELLO. Your Cheerios Frontier Town is not complete—you only thought it was. After all, what western town (or eastern town, for that matter) would be complete without this most essential structure? Get three or four for total authenticity. Reproduced here from the original drawing that was suppressed in the 1940s by unimaginative cereal barons. Simply cut out, fold tabs and place in appropriate location in Frontier Town layout atop card table or wherever.

Researched and written by Landon Chesney

THE TRIAL OF TOM LAUGHLIN

Back in 1971, Warner Communications released a movie called *Billy Jack*. The film was originally to have been distributed by Twentieth-Century Fox but that was before its writer-director-editor-star, Tom Laughlin, fought the good fight with the Fox executives. They wanted to re-edit the film into something markedly different, a prospect which did not send Laughlin into cartwheels of ecstasy. A battle ensued (at one point, Laughlin stole the film's soundtrack from the Fox vaults to obtain better bargaining leverage) and that's how Warner ended up releasing *Billy Jack*. But Laughlin wasn't overjoyed with *them*, either.

Warner, claimed Laughlin and his co-star/wife Delores Taylor, did a slipshod job of promotion and distribution. There were lawsuits and counter-lawsuits and *counter*-counter-lawsuits and when the legal debris was cleared away, *Billy Jack* got a new lease on life. A new campaign was instigated, more in keeping with Tom Laughlin's idea of how to release a movie. Bombard the public with commercials.

No one is certain how much money was spent but, by any accounts, it was astronomical. "And," said some of them, "with that kind of advertising coin, you could make an all-time grosser out of Drivers Training films. Or even Otto Preminger movies!" Billboards, radio spots, newspaper ads and TV blurbs all proclaimed the product as "one of the most popular pictures of our time!" Laughlin reportedly had wanted them to say "THE most popular. . ." but that was judged a bit pretentious for a movie which at the time was a box office flop.

One of the most interesting and controversial elements of the blitz was the engaging of critic Rex Reed who, for a nice chunk of advertising money, filmed parts of his favorable review for a TV commercial.

That's how *Billy Jack* became a high box-office grosser—by virtually nagging people into the theatres, some say. And while all this was going on, the Laughlins set to work on a sequel called, not surprisingly, *The Trial of Billy Jack*. That it was not surprising is due to the fact that they spent more time in court than before the cameras.

Case in point: American-International Pictures resurrected the 1967 motorcycle flick *The Born Losers* in which Laughlin had first played the role of Billy Jack. The film had been a disaster its first go-round, but AIP figured to reissue it and coast along on the Billy Jack hard-sell then in progress. Laughlin went to court, fearing people would mistake the film for his then-forthcoming Billy Jack sequel. He also took ads out, across the country, pointing up the difference and dismissing *The Born Losers* as a "motorcycle film I appeared in." He did not mention that he also wrote and directed said motorcycle film.

Later, when the real sequel came out, backed by the same type of advertising campaign, it also pulled down heavy grosses. (Most of the commercials emphasized the film's brief Kung Fu scenes.) Many filmmakers would be pleased with those gross figures. Tom Laughlin didn't happen to be among them.

He was irate that neither of his high-grossing films had won or even been nominated for any Academy Awards and the critical response had been only slightly more substantial. The off-screen Billy Jack has never been known for his humility. Director Robert Altman, who worked with him only once *(The Delinquents,* 1957), calls him a "total egomaniac." Others are less subtle. About the dearth of Oscars, Laughlin could do little. But he saw himself fit to assail the critics who had snubbed him so.

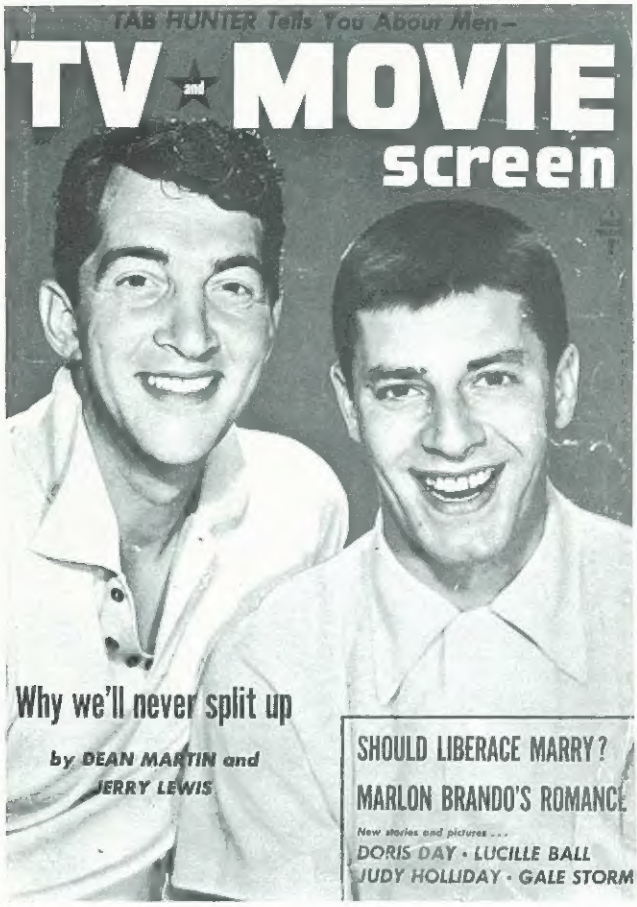
When it came time to re-release *Trial* in Southern California, the Billy Jack Enterprises advertising coffers came up with $300,000 and Laughlin rolled out his "Billy Jack Versus the Critics" contest. The first ad, by convoluted logic, showed how critics always snub the films audiences like most. Laughlin listed the twenty top-grossing films of all time (modestly putting *Billy Jack* third) and then printed several critics' Ten Best lists for 1974 to point out the discrepancies. The critics were honoring lukewarm box office fare like *Scenes From a Marriage* and ignoring the ones the public had voted for by buying tickets. Apparently, Laughlin thought it highly significant that not one critic had named *Gone With the Wind* as the best picture of 1974.

The second ad made even less sense. Laughlin said that the film companies, by quoting know-nothing critics, have created "critic-monsters." (This is the same man who put Rex Reed on television, remember?) Why not, Laughlin asked, have *two* reviews of every film, side-by-side, one favorable and one unfavorable? That, he said, would give the public a chance to make up their minds for themselves. (Mull that over for a moment. Problems of finding two such absonant reviewers aside, movie-goers would have to pay their money and view the movie in question before deciding which review was valid.) The plan would also, Laughlin didn't say, give each film-maker—even Otto Preminger—a stack of favorable reviews to quote in ads. In the trade, they call these "money-quotes" and whether or not you get them usually has something to do with whether or not you believe in critics.

All of this was prelude to a contest with $10,000 in prizes for the best essays on "Why the Critics Are So Out of Touch with the American People." Alternative viewpoints need not apply. To Tom Laughlin, it must have seemed a brilliant scheme to promote his movie and extract some revenge.

He was wrong. The "Billy Jack Versus the Critics" crusade was a spectacular flop. The movie it was supposed to promote, *Trial of Billy Jack,* was lost in the melee and died lousy at the box-office. The scheduled three-week run was hastily pared down to one week and "Versus the Critics" ads were scrapped. They couldn't scrap the contest quite so easily. The Federal Trade Commission expects Billy Jack Enterprises to award all those expensive prizes. Maybe audiences don't care what critics think of filmmakers—but they care even less what filmmakers think of critics. □

QUOTE/UNQUOTE: "Most people today can no longer expect to receive consolation and exaltation from art. The refined, the rich, the professional do-nothings, the distillers of quintessence, desire only the peculiar, the sensational, the eccentric, the scandalous. And I, since the advent of Cubism, have fed these fellows what they wanted and satisfied these critics with all the ridiculous ideas that passed through my head. The less they understood me the more they admired me. Through amusing myself with all these farces I became celebrated and rich. I do not have the effrontery to consider myself an artist, not in the grand old meaning of the word. Titian, Rembrandt and Goya were the great painters. I am only a public clown, a mountebank." --Picasso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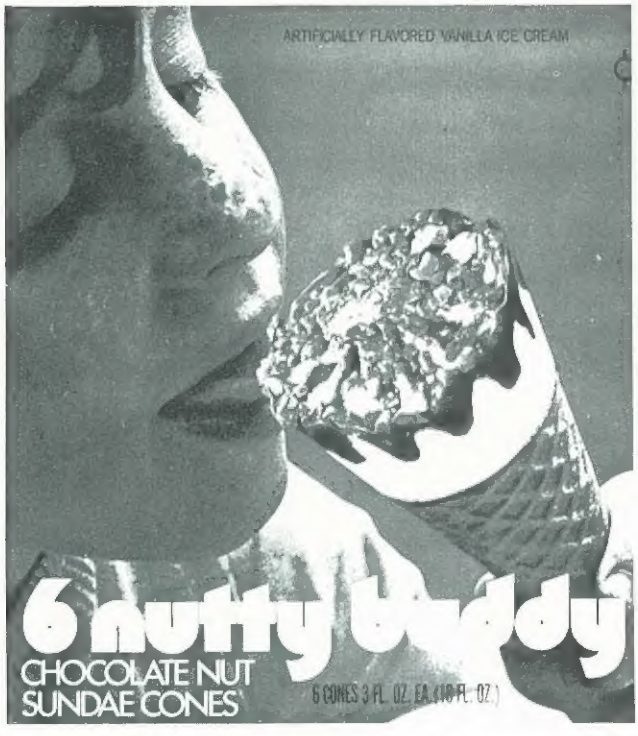
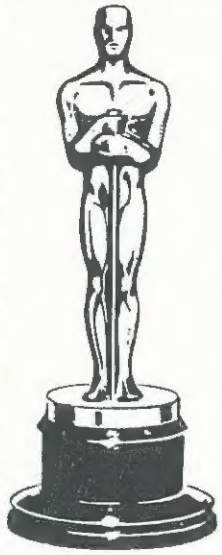


Softcore porn in package design? Balian Ice Cream Co.



PRAVDA HITS OSCAR PICKS

MOSCOW (UPI)—The Communist Party newspaper Pravda chided American filmmakers Sunday for granting awards to movies that glorify crime.

In a critique of this year's Academy Awards presentation, Pravda ticked off films like "The Godfather Part II," "Chinatown" and "Lenny," which it said show the seamy side of American life.

"Corruption, cruelty and lawlessness are the main features" of "The Godfather," it said.

The article also attacked catastrophe films such as "Earthquake," which it said reaped financial success through "technical tricks."

"Money and only money plays the most important role in choosing the film to be rewarded with an Oscar," Pravda concluded.

Academy Award time, 1975

Writer Collects Oscar for 1956 Film

"I must say it wasn't tarnished, so they kept it in good shape," writer Dalton Trumbo, 69, said Thursday of the Oscar finally given him for a 1956 film he wrote under a pseudonym.

At the awards ceremony 18 years ago, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had voted a statuette for Robert Rich, named by the King Brothers as the writer of their film, "The Brave One," about a boy and a bull.

No one came forward.

Producer Frank King subsequently described the mysterious Robert Rich as "a young fellow about 34 who dabbles in writing and photography." Rich wore a goatee and was "somewhat of a character," King said.

But rumors persisted that the writer was Trumbo, who had been blacklisted by film studios and jailed for contempt of Congress after refusing to answer questions by a congressional committee investigating communism.

Recently, Frank and Maurice King, saying they had decided to set the record straight, notified the academy that Trumbo, indeed, wrote "The Brave One" under a phony name because of the political climate of the 1950s.

The board of the academy, which had said it would keep the Oscar until the "true author" was positively identified, then voted to award it to Trumbo.

Walter Mirisch, producer and president of the academy, made the belated presentation at Trumbo's home several days ago.

"It was rather nice of them to clean the board and get rid of that period," observed Trumbo, who has been ill since removal of a lung and suffering a heart attack. "This was one of the little nasties that remained."

But he said he was not overly excited by the Oscar one way or the other.

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Ralph Bakshi and the Wizards

BY Bill Spicer & Bernard Zuber

With the release of *Fritz the Cat* in 1972 writer-director Ralph Bakshi began producing a cycle of animated films that soon brought him a reputation as this country's frontrunner among directors eager to abandon tried and true industry product. Bakshi's approach to *Fritz*, based on Robert Crumb's underground comix character, coincided with the late 1960s west coast underground comix movement, another group seeking to break from establishment conventions in their own medium. *Fritz* was the first X-rated feature length cartoon to gain general release and commercial success. The picture seemed at first to be only taking advantage of newly-relaxed standards within the movie business, ballyhooing its X-rating in advertising and public relations write-ups. Yet *Fritz* also owed much of its style and attitude to Bakshi's own streetwise upbringing in New York City during the 1940s and '50s. There he grew up reading the comic books that the publishing establishment wanted most to exorcise from its ranks — EC's horror and science fiction line, the darkly moralistic commentary in *Shock Suspenstories* and the social satire of Harvey Kurtzman's original *Mad*, which all made a lasting impression on teenager Bakshi. With this background it's not surprising that Bakshi would later be attracted to the antics of Crumb's disenfranchised cat, seeing possibilities for an updated liberalization of ideas in the animated cartoon format. When Fritz was transposed into a wildly anarchical storyline of Bakshi's own devising, Bakshi found himself the man in the middle, catching flak from overground and underground reactionaries alike. Though *Fritz* took liberties with its source material, and was flatly rejected by Crumb and the San Francisco community of underground cartoonists, the movie became a controversial hit among both critics and audiences.

Bakshi followed *Fritz* with the X-rated *Heavy Traffic*, partly inspired by Hubert Selby Jr.'s 1957 novel *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. Bakshi used *Traffic* to caricature elements of his youth in Brooklyn ghetto life, making it, he says, his most emotionally personal film to date. A combination of live action, drawings, paintings, reversed and altered film, it was considered by some critics a major step forward for American animation — an impressionistic study of a young man's formative past, self-dramatizing, overstated, grotesque, dreamlike, nightmarish. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* and Penelope Gilliat of *The New Yorker* declared *Heavy Traffic* a masterpiece, as did the New York Museum of Modern Art when it broke precedent by publicly reviewing a movie. The film's four-letter words and abrasive treatment of ethnic groups also reminded some reviewers of Mort Sahl's celebrated one-liner, "Is there anyone I haven't offended?" Made in less than a year, *Heavy Traffic* opened in 1973 to exceptionally good box office.

In the summer of 1975 came Bakshi's ill-fated *Coonskin*, an R-rated mix of animation and live action that never got far enough to generate good box office anywhere. In the Los Angeles area it played for three weeks at Hollywood's Egyptian theatre and then, for a progression of reasons peculiar to the vagaries of movie exhibition, was withdrawn from national circulation. *Coonskin* provoked controversy starting with its initial previews, embracing as it does the worlds of Super Fly and negro sharecroppers — a modernized folk tale of three black Uncle Remus-like southern bumpkins (a fox, a bear and a rabbit) who migrate to New York and confront Harlem's power structure on its own terms, knocking over corrupt cops, the Mafia, fake preachers and synthetic revolutionaries. The NAACP officially gave the picture their vote of approval, but radical CORE members fronted a much-publicized attack centered on the charge that a white director had no right to caricature blacks — a spurious charge, Bakshi feels, when *Coonskin's* heroes triumph over both white racists and black crooks. CORE's attack is a sore point with Bakshi whose attitude is that everyone is fair game for caricature in film or any story medium, ethnic portrayals being within the rightful province of writers, artists and directors regardless of color. CORE's media agitation effectively killed *Coonskin*, blacks and whites stayed away in droves, and the distribution company pulled the movie amidst widely divided reviews. Someday it may be reissued, Bakshi hopes, so it can reach the audience he knows it will have with the proper distribution.

Ralph Bakshi

Still unreleased after completion almost two years ago is *Hey Good Lookin'*, another city picture drawing on Bakshi's repertoire of visions interpreting New York street life, this time set in the late 1950s/early '60s. The milieu is *West Side Story* and *Lords of Flatbush*. Vinnie is the cool, greaser-type leader of his all-white leather-jacketed gang, the Brooklyn Stompers. His closest buddy is "Crazy", resembling a young Jerry Lewis in appearance, who earned his nickname, and continues living up to it, by killing with little provocation, showing no remorse, no sense of right or wrong. Vinnie and his hip-chick girlfriend Roz, along with Crazy and his girl Eva, move the story along to a soundtrack of 1950s records culminating in a showdown gangwar when Vinnie's Stompers meet the rival Black Chaplains, led by jive-talking "Boogaloo." *Hey Good Lookin'* has gone through one revision over its original preview form and is set for release sometime after *Wizards* has finished its initial run.

Considering the subjects Bakshi has brought to his first four films, it might be surprising to see him now dealing with a story rooted in fantasy and sword & sorcery. Having an interest in both animation and fantasy, we visited Bakshi at his studio in Hollywood to find out how he came to do a picture like *Wizards*.

Our meeting takes place in Bakshi's office at a time when the picture is nearing the end of its 18-month production schedule. Loose ends are being tied up, scenes completed, soundtrack recorded, a final cut hopefully ready in a few weeks. We ask Bakshi how he got started on this kind of project, and what he thinks it'll be like in finished form. He lights a cigarette, leans back in his swivel chair and props up his sandaled feet on the edge of the big, old hardwood table strewn with production notes, sketches and interdepartment memos.

"I got started on *Wizards* just like almost everyone else who started as a cartoonist or like anyone who works in an art medium related to sword & sorcery and fantasy. He's aware of Conan. He's aware of Tolkien. He's aware of fantasy literature and fantasy illustration, and he either likes this field or he doesn't. I am a fan of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Should that be surprising? It's that simple to me. It starts as far back as going home from high school and drawing sword & sorcery scenes. Upon liking the genre, I wanted to do an animated feature coming as close to Frank Frazetta and Roy Krenkel, fantasy and sword & sorcery artists, as you can in animation. The problem with animation is that you can't get as detailed in the characters as you can on the printed page. You can't move that kind of detail. But in animation you do have a chance of getting great detail into the backgrounds. Actually animation itself can be painstaking in its attention to details. It's like a medieval craft — animators hunched over drawing boards, like monks in their cubicles laboring

Drawing ©1976 Bakshi Prod. Inc.

over illuminated manuscripts.

"But basically *Wizards* came about because I love sword & sorcery and classic fantasy. The most artistic input I've had in any of my films has been in this one. I was able for the first time to use most of my own drawings I'd never used before. I would estimate I was able to design at least 60% or 70% of *Wizards'* characters because sword & sorcery drawing is the kind of thing I like to do when just fooling around."

Bakshi, like Disney before him, has always taken a hand in shaping the narrative form of his cartoons, if not writing actual shooting scripts. Full color *Wizards* backgrounds and cels on the office walls suggest a scenario of drama, romance, comedy, legend and myth.

"I wrote the story. I tried to keep the plot as simple as possible because the motion picture companies and the money men aren't aware of sword & sorcery. They don't really know the genre at all. *Wizards* is Tolkienesque, but I could not go to some of the extremes I would have liked. On the other hand I would have to admit that the majority of kids who will see this film — it's my first PG, which is different from an R or an X — are not sword & sorcery fans as such. Remember that science fiction and fantasy fandom doesn't represent the majority of young teenagers, so I'm trying to introduce sword & sorcery to young teenagers for the first time. I couldn't afford to miss the opportunity of doing this by going with a complicated story line. If I did that with *Wizards* I think I would be inviting commercial disaster. It's like having to start at point A and progressing to point B when you're reading science fiction. You start at a certain age with *Rocket Ship Galileo* and end up reading *The Left Hand of Darkness*. So I had to begin at a point that I think is decent sword & sorcery but is obviously introductory for the kids who have never been exposed to it. I know that *Wizards* will be visually stunning to the kids who are into sword & sorcery and that the other kids will also know what it's about. It's a basic we've-seen-it-before-maybe kind of plot. It's a good EC science fiction plot."

At first thought the average EC science fiction story wouldn't seem that adaptable to a fantasy setting. EC wasn't known for treatments of fantasy themes in the usual sense, involving remote lands of magic, wizards, netherworld demons and spellbinding potions. The idea of fusing classic fantasy and EC is intriguing, if that's what Bakshi has in mind.

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"In *Wizards* we have a whole range of characters. We have mutants, because we're dealing with our planet in the future, after a devastating atomic war. We're dealing with mutants, demons, goblins, wizards both good and evil, robots, a mechanized army, and we're dealing with cavemen. It's a planet gone mad because of a total holocaust that wiped out life as we know it from the entire globe. The holocaust takes place 15 years from now. The planet revitalizes itself in about two million years. It's a world already beyond time. The planet was lying dormant all those years under a cloud of radioactivity until life slowly crawls back to it in different forms. Are the emerging mutants like fairy tale demons and goblins? It depends on how you define the word. They're mutants as we've seen them in comic books, they're science fiction mutants, froglike and scaly. They can be ugly, but they can be funny. Some of them are human. Blackwolf, the bad wizard, looks kind of human. It's a whole thing evolved from the breakdown of genes because of radioactivity, a combination of beastlike characters. All of these mutants aren't exactly bad either. Some of them are delightful to watch.

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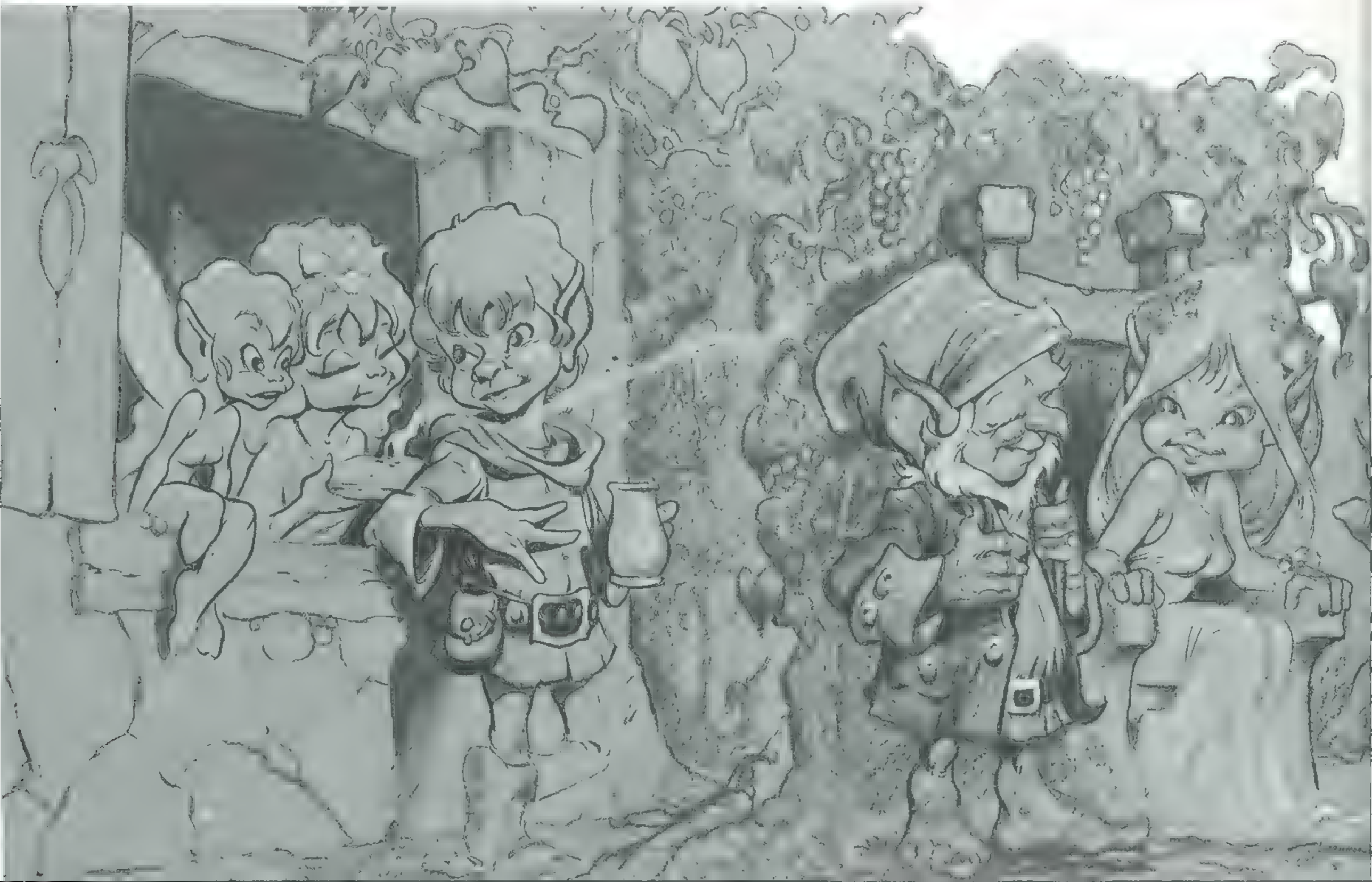

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"In a nutshell that's the basic story. There is humor in it, with the old Wizard Avatar and Blackwolf's mutant legion, but humor under a backbone of adventure."

The more telling humor in previous Bakshi productions is harsh and trenchant, growing from the sort of urban adventure experienced in hostile city streets, honky-tonks and decaying brownstone walk-ups. Bakshi has been known also for introducing messages through this humor, sometimes implied and sometimes blatant.

"*Wizards* is meant to be just a good sword & sorcery adventure story. No emphatic message this time. But if by message you meant anti-war, I'd say yes. It's also an anti-war picture because war is an element that comes back to the planet after millions of years of not being there. War tries to start right over again, and the heroes of the story take it upon themselves to stop it once and for all. Basically it shows that specific people have an attraction to war forever, and this is what we have to change. But there's no real message in the film, just as there's no real message in Conan. The job here in *Wizards* was just to bring animated sword & sorcery to the screen. What's been decided is that messages aren't important in films every trip. You know what I'm saying?"

Bakshi warms to the subject, lights another cigarette and leans forward to press home a point.

"I've been criticized in the past for having too much message in my films, being too shrill, too obvious. I could bitch about it a little, which is fine because that's part of me. I consider a cartoonist an artist. I consider cartooning a fine art. I've had lots of discussions with lots of cartoonists, guys I respect, without mentioning any names. Up and down the range I was amazed to find how many of them bitch about wanting to do better work for comics, and bitch about different publishers always wanting nothing but crap. And then I was amazed that I was being put down by some professional artists who love the graphics of my films but hate the fact that I was trying to do message pictures like *Coonskin*. I was aghast! What I was trying to do, you know, was my right. Artistically speaking, one should do what one feels is right. That's the only thing art's about. They should get out there and do the better kind of comic book work they're talking about, have it published wherever they can. If they don't do it, who will? You make your own kind of art. I've done some films that have revolutionized, I would think the animation business whether one likes any of the films I did or not. I choose to do the art I do. I chose not to do a message picture with *Wizards* because I chose not to. If I want to come back next time with a message picture, I will. The trick is to never lie dormant and never repeat yourself. I could never do a syndicated comic strip day in and day out. I'm not putting down the guys who do. I'm saying you can reach a point in your career where guys like myself have broken through to a major motion picture company that's willing to spend a lot of bread to make different kinds of films. I'm able, on the art side, to do whatever I want. Instead of artists supporting one another, seeing that it's possible to reach a certain level of freedom in the arts and still make good money at it, I'm amazed to find artists who will say only that they didn't like the message films I did. That kind of thing is lunacy. It's self-defeating to artists. An artist should do whatever he wants.

"Maybe too many great artists waste their time not delivering messages, not delivering points of view. Hey, you know, maybe comic art would take a major leap forward. Maybe if comic artists start delivering some decent messages, adults would start buying their books just like adults have gone to see my

In the good kingdom of Montaga, drawn by Mike Ploog. Delia, the two wizards' mother, at far right.

©1976 Ralph Bakshi Productions Inc.

over illuminated manuscripts.

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"*Wizards* is meant to be just a good sword & sorcery adventure story. No emphatic message this time. But if by message you meant anti-war, I'd say yes. It's also an anti-war picture because war is an element that comes back to the planet after millions of years of not being there. War tries to start right over again, and the heroes of the story take it upon themselves to stop it once and for all. Basically it shows that specific people have an attraction to war forever, and this is what we have to change. But there's no real message in the film, just as there's no real message in Conan. The job here in *Wizards* was just to bring animated sword & sorcery to the screen. What's been decided is that messages aren't important in films every trip. You know what I'm saying?"

Bakshi warms to the subject, lights another cigarette and leans forward to press home a point.

"I've been criticized in the past for having too much message in my films, being too shrill, too obvious. I could bitch about it a little, which is fine because that's part of me. I consider a cartoonist an artist. I consider cartooning a fine art. I've had lots of discussions with lots of cartoonists, guys I respect, without mentioning any names. Up and down the range I was amazed to find how many of them bitch about wanting to do better work for comics, and bitch about different publishers always wanting nothing but crap. And then I was amazed that I was being put down by some professional artists who love the graphics of my films but hate the fact that I was trying to do message pictures like *Coonskin*. I was aghast! What I was trying to do, you know, was my right. Artistically speaking, one should do what one feels is right. That's the only thing art's about. They should get out there and do the better kind of comic book work they're talking about, have it published wherever they can. If they don't do it, who will? You make your own kind of art. I've done some films that have revolutionized, I would think the animation business whether one likes any of the films I did or not. I choose to do the art I do. I chose not to do a message picture with *Wizards* because I chose not to. If I want to come back next time with a message picture, I will. The trick is to never lie dormant and never repeat yourself. I could never do a syndicated comic strip day in and day out. I'm not putting down the guys who do. I'm saying you can reach a point in your career where guys like myself have broken through to a major motion picture company that's willing to spend a lot of bread to make different kinds of films. I'm able, on the art side, to do whatever I want. Instead of artists supporting one another, seeing that it's possible to reach a certain level of freedom in the arts and still make good money at it, I'm amazed to find artists who will say only that they didn't like the message films I did. That kind of thing is lunacy. It's self-defeating to artists. An artist should do whatever he wants.

"Maybe too many great artists waste their time not delivering messages, not delivering points of view. Hey, you know, maybe comic art would take a major leap forward. Maybe if comic artists start delivering some decent messages, adults would start buying their books just like adults have gone to see my

In the good kingdom of Montaga, drawn by Mike Ploog. Delia, the two wizards' mother, at far right.

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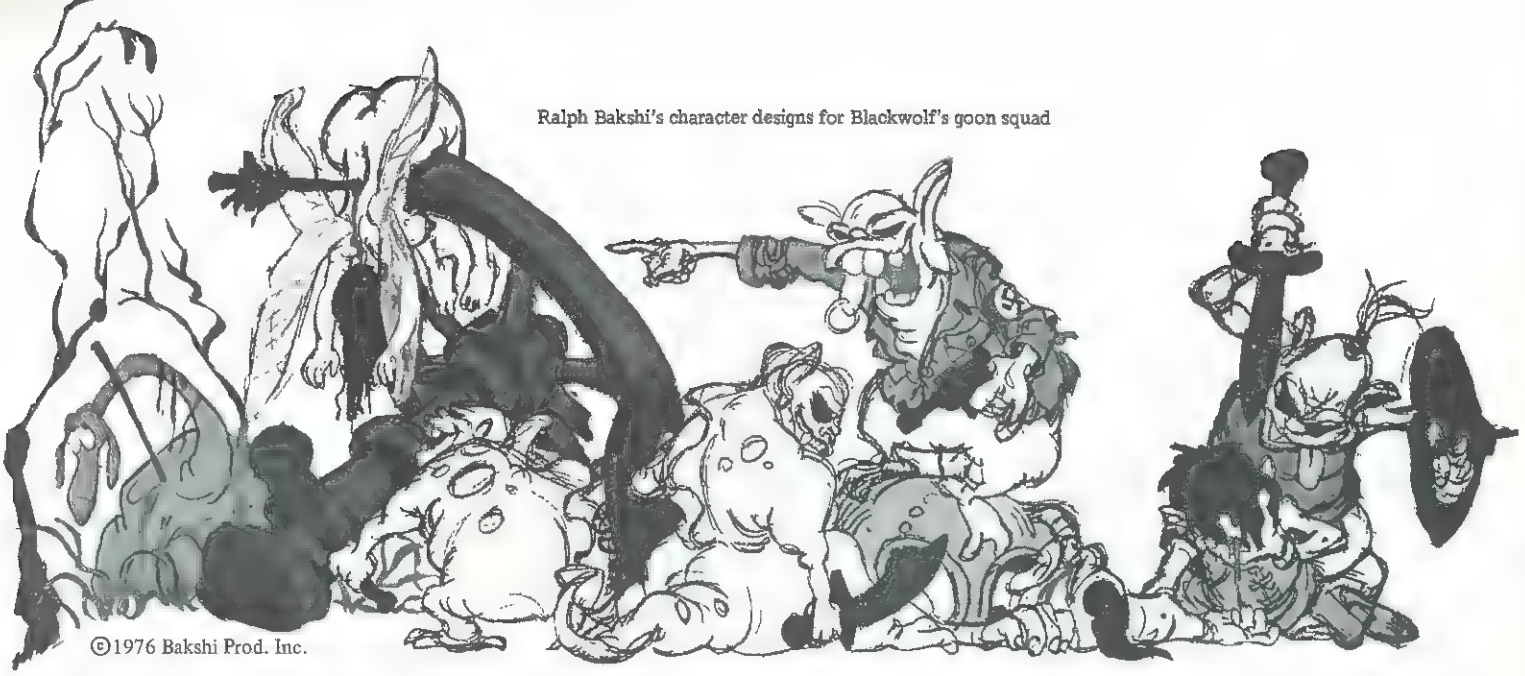

Ralph Bakshi's character designs for Blackwolf's goon squad

©1976 Bakshi Prod. Inc.

cartoons. You can't keep doing the same kind of thing you've always done. My experiment in animation has been to try every facet of art I could."

Just as Bakshi uses a wide range of art techniques, he's as eclectic in his choice of music. *Heavy Traffic* played out its visual blitzkrieg against a sound track that included "Take Five" (Paul Desmond & Dave Brubeck), "Maybelline" (Chuck Berry), "The Four Seasons" (Vivaldi), "Concerto in B-Flat Minor" (Tchaikovsky) and "Scarborough Fair" (Brazil '77).

"Music budgets of only $3000 on my other pictures forced me to economize by using pre-existing music. In the case of *Traffic* it was done by buying rights to those recordings. For a long time the *Wizards* music situation was unresolved. There were about fifteen different ways I could go, and I hadn't finalized it until well along into production. I didn't know if it would necessarily have a lot of music. I could have used some strange electronic sounds in spots. I could have gone with conventional music and arrangements. So much of it works, it's staggering. I really don't understand why. Classical, rock, country & western, it all works. I've got one part of the picture where a mutant frog finds an old record—don't forget this is two million years in the future—and when he plays it we hear 'We're Off To See the Wizard' from MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* with Judy Garland. And it's beautiful, just magnificent! It has nothing to do with story continuity, but I'm saying you would be surprised at what works in this film if you had to choose from pre-existing music. Certain kinds of music in the classical vein would have fit. On the other hand I didn't want to get pretentious with *Wizards*. It's a straight-ahead fantasy adventure, so I think I was smart to go with something functional but still inventive. *Wizards* is the first picture I've been able to afford to have scored by a professional. The music has been composed especially for the film by Andrew Belling in the styles of modern hard rock and early English medieval folk music, all played on a Moog synthesizer. Belling has also scored tv series episodes and tv movies."

We haven't seen any *Wizards* test-reels or finished footage. But model sheets, cel art and backgrounds give the impression that it's a departure from past Bakshi productions, and more expensive.

"It's the biggest looking film I've ever done, and has the most artwork in it. That's different. It's not higher budgeted than my other pictures. It's about the same, costing under two million. The difference is the live action of *Coonskin, Hey Good Lookin'* and *Heavy Traffic* cost a lot of money. *Wizards* is all animation, so I was able to put more art into it because part of the budget hasn't been siphoned off into live action.

"The art techniques this time differ from my other films in that I'm trying to get a blend of fine art, fantasy art and cartooning. The point of view I have toward sword & sorcery or fantasy art is really a throwback to the things I love — medieval drawings, Durer, Bosch, Rembrandt, Fuseli, Blake, Dulac and Rackham."

With his mention of Dulac and Rackham, Bakshi is apparently in step with the current revival of interest in 19th century art and turn-of-the-century illustration. Large paperback portfolios of this sort of fantasy art are now on sale as attractive gift items. Readers of these books should be ready for what Bakshi presents in *Wizards*.

"Basically I lean toward fine art in my own paintings. So with *Wizards* I've tried to cross-pollinate fine art with sword & sorcery. Or, instead of sword & sorcery, let's say fantasy adventure. If I'm making any statement in the picture, I'm trying to show that fantasy art can be fine art. Fantasy can be serious art. I consider Bosch, Durer, Goya, Blake, Fuseli all fantasy artists, all sword & sorcery artists. You know what I'm saying? I've tried to marry the two forms. That's really what Bakshi's cartoon approach is on this film, and the people I've hired for special work on particular sequences fit into that category, as do the steady crew in all departments who've always been with me. These two groups, I would say, are the most valuable to any of my films."

Weehawk, the elf barbarian

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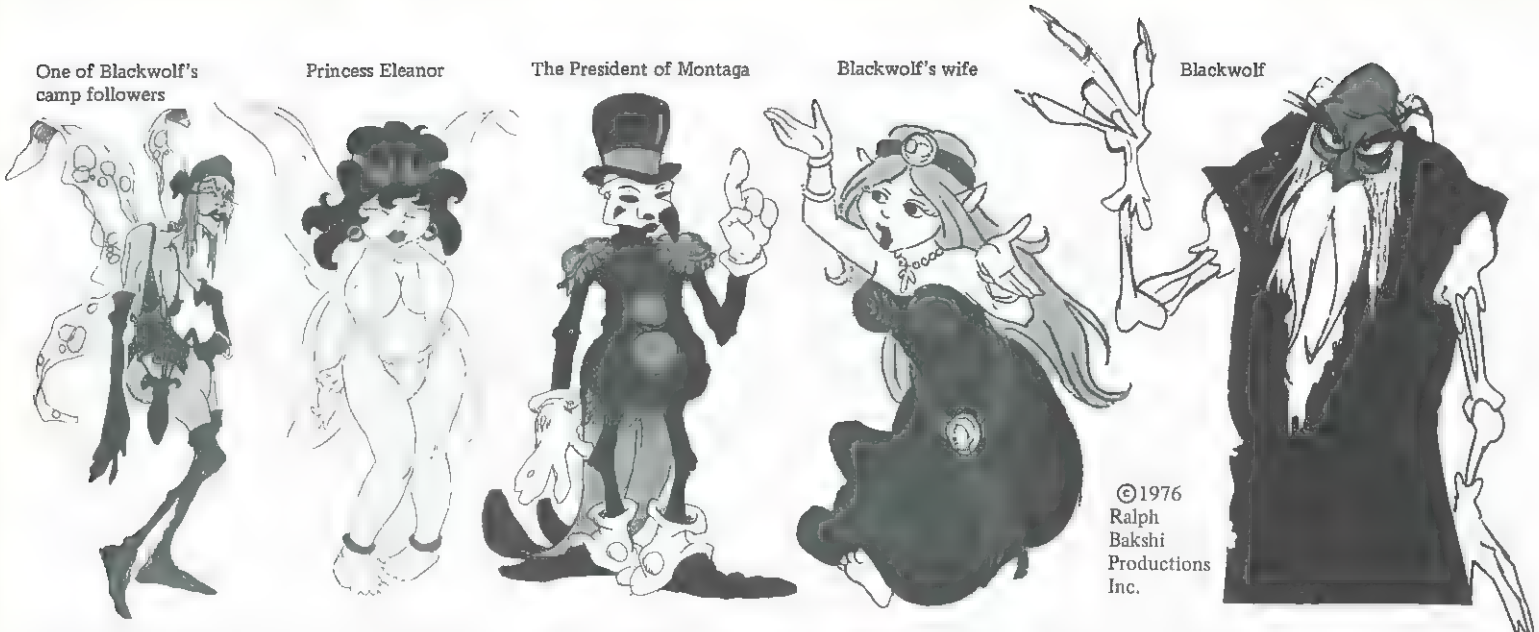
■ Janet Cummings majored in Apparel Design at UCLA during 1952-54 and, following a year of working in garment industry agencies and art departments, decided to enter the animation field by way of the only job opening available at the time—the Disney Studios paint lab. There she was part of the staff that mixed and matched paint to the studio's own requirements, and later painted cels for *Sleeping Beauty*. She left Disney in 1959 to freelance for independent ink & paint services which provided finished cels for television cartoons including Larry Harmon's *Bozo the Clown* and, in 1961-62, Bob Clampett's *Beany & Cecil* series. While with Hanna-Barbera from 1963-73 she went from ink & paint to final-checking and color-keying character designs for *The Flintstones* and *Yogi Bear* among many others. Between H-B seasons she freelanced, her first work for Bakshi Productions coming in 1973 when she painted overlay cels for backgrounds and final-checked the color on *Heavy Traffic*. Since 1974 she's been with Bakshi in charge of color-keying, designing three or more color model variations for a single character until one is chosen. Cummings color-modeled all the characters in *Wizards* and



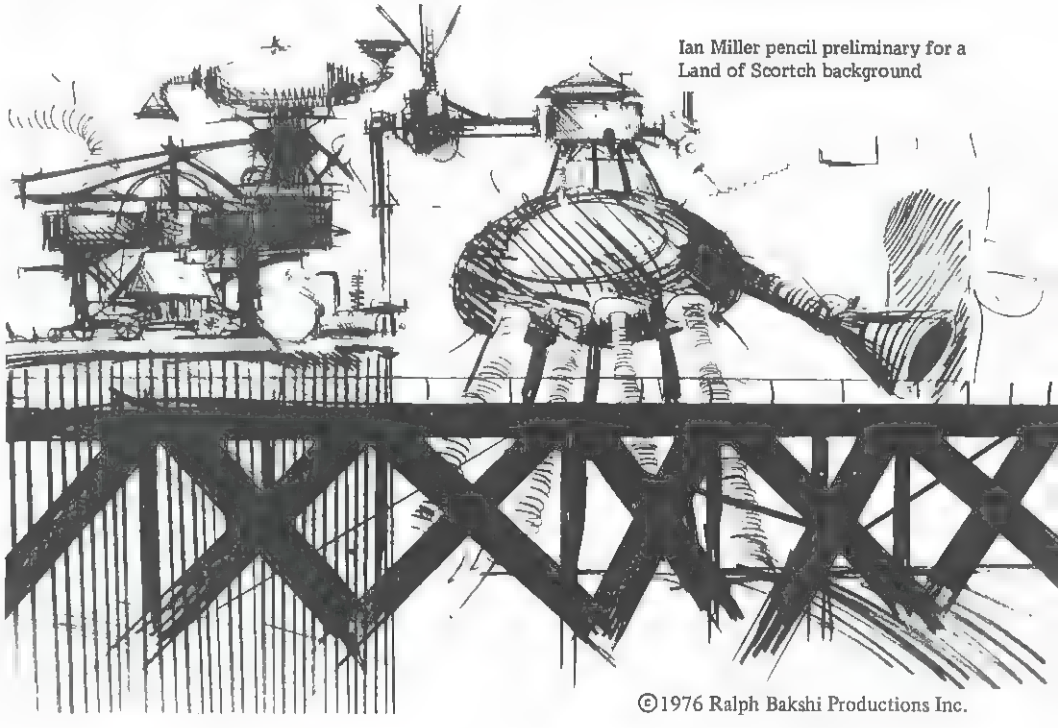
final-checked the film—her most ambitious assignment so far, she says, and the most fun, because of the movie's scope and wide ranging cast.

■ Ian Miller was born and raised in London where he studied at the Northwich School of Art and at St. Martin's School of Art, then taught and lectured for four years at Sir John Cass College. Since 1970 he's specialized in freelance science fiction and fantasy illustration, a recent example being the "Gormenghast" centerfold for Peacock Press/Bantam's 1976 *Worlds of Fantasy Calendar*. His many book covers include *At the Mountains of Madness* (H.P. Lovecraft), *Guardians of Time* (Poul Anderson), *Beyond Tomorrow* (Damon Knight), *S Is For Space* (Ray Bradbury) and *Galactic Pot-Healer* (Philip K. Dick). He has had two one-man exhibitions: 1973 at the Greenwich Theatre Gallery and 1974 at the Jordan Gallery, London. Miller's work as a gothic fantasy artist incorporates arcane imagery reflecting his interest in Medievalism, early myth and pre-Renaissance manuscript drawings, his acknowledged influences being Rackham, Bestall, Blake and Soutine. Authors J.R.R. Tolkien, Mervyn Peake, J.G. Ballard and Ambrose Bierce are among his favorites. *Wizards* is Miller's first work in American animation, his art setting the sombre, baroque tone for the Land of Scortch backgrounds.

■ Mike Ploog did advertising art throughout the 1960s until he entered the animation field in 1969 doing layout/storyboards at Filmation Studios, followed by one season with Hanna-Barbera. During this period he also freelanced for comics, starting with Petersen's black & white specialty magazines *Hot Rod Cartoons, CARtoons* and *Cycletoons*. Citing Will Eisner as his major art influence, he spent nearly a year in 1970-71 assisting on comic strips and illustrations for *PS*, a monthly preventive-maintenance technical manual produced by Eisner for the U.S. Army Department. During 1972 Ploog's humor-adventure strip "Alfy Radar" appeared in *Esquire*. He contributed also to Jim Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie*, plus Marvel's *Crazy, Planet of the Apes*, Werewolf, Ghost Rider, The Beast, Frankenstein, King Kull and Man-Thing. After writing and drawing "Luke Malone" for Seaboard-Atlas in 1975, Ploog returned to animation by way of Sanrio Studio's feature-length musical fantasy *Metamorphoses*. He then joined Bakshi's *Wizards* staff to create and develop character designs for Avatar's and Blackwolf's barbarian hordes and numerous supporting characters. Ploog also drew the history stills used with voice-over narration to connect animated story-continuity.

■ Irv Spence started professionally in 1931 as an in-betweener on Krazy Kat (Charles Mintz, Columbia Studios), then in-betweened for Ub Iwerks from 1932-36 on series characters Flip the Frog and Willie Whopper. Some of his earliest animation was the Elmer Fudd forerunner, Egghead, in Tex Avery's "Egghead Rides Again" (1936). In 1937 Spence joined Avery at Warner Brothers, working exclusively on the color Merrie Melodies. Except for about one year during 1939-56 he was in different units at MGM where he contributed to the Captain & the Kids series for director George Gordon, Hugh Harman's Bear Family cartoons, Tex Avery ("Blitz Wolf" among others) and many Tom & Jerries for Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera. The one year away from MGM was 1945 when he left to do theatrical features and industrial shorts produced by John Sutherland. After MGM closed down its animation unit in 1957 Spence again did industrials for Sutherland, went to Hanna-Barbera for their 1962 television show *The Jetsons* and freelanced on tv commercials well into the '60s. He has since worked on numerous features including the Chuck Jones tv special *Horton Hears A Who* (1970) and Jones' *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1971). From *Heavy Traffic* in 1973 to the present, Spence has been a key animator on all Bakshi films.

■ John Sparey began his graphic arts career in 1950 as a student at the University of California at Berkeley, contributing cartoons to their satire magazine *Pelican*. This led him in



Ian Miller pencil preliminary for a Land of Scortch background

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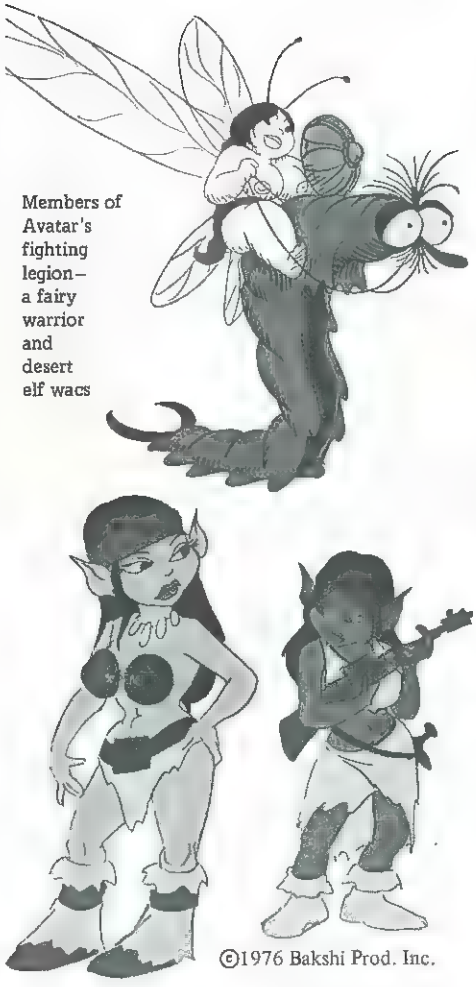
1951 to an assistant animator's job for Jay Ward's pioneering television series *Crusader Rabbit*. He joined the Disney studio in 1953 to in-between and assist on *Lady and the Tramp, Sleeping Beauty* and several Disney tv episodes including "Goofy's Success Story" and "The Great Cat Family." He left Disney in 1958 and returned to *Crusader Rabbit*, this time as animator on the second series, in color, for Shull Bonsell's production unit. Then came the 1960-61 *Calvin and the Colonel* television cartoons, produced by TV Spots Inc. During 1961-62 he animated for producer-narrator Dale Robertson's western *The Man From Button Willow*, followed in 1962-63 by Mattel Toys' tv syndicated *The Funny Company*. After six seasons with Hanna-Barbera, Sparey left television for the feature-length *archy & mehitabel* (1969). Since 1971 he has been with Bakshi Productions as animator and layout director.

■ Johnnie Vita attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn at night while his days were spent painting animation backgrounds for the Paul Terry Terrytoons studio in New Rochelle from 1935-40. He was drafted in 1940 and became a motion picture cameraman assigned to Signal Corps training films, then served as a combat photographer in both Pacific and European theatres, seeing action in the Aleutians and at Anzio. After discharge in 1945, war injuries kept him from drawing and painting for about four years, so he stayed with still photography and newsreels. In 1950 he returned to animation when he became a founding partner of the Bill Sturm studio, producing live and animated television commercials for all the major New York ad agencies. He left in 1963 to join CBS-Terrytoons where he met Bakshi, who was then starting as an animator until he soon became art director of that unit. Vita has worked in close association with Bakshi ever since the 1967-68 *Spiderman* CBS tv cartoon series, later painting virtually all the color backgrounds (drawn first in black & white) for *Fritz the Cat* through *Wizards*. During production of *Heavy Traffic* he and Bakshi were often up until 4 a.m. shooting hundreds of reference stills in Harlem. Vita operates his own commercial photography studio in Port Chester, New York, periodically commuting to Hollywood for work on each Bakshi feature.

■ Art Vitello freelanced at home by picking up professional animation jobs while still in high school and, following graduation in 1971, went directly to assistant animator on *Fritz the Cat*. He also assisted on *Heavy Traffic* until he became a full-time animator at about mid-point and stayed with Bakshi to animate several characters in sequences for *Coonskin*. On the non-Bakshi production *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*, Vitello's main animation was for the segment in which Fritz fantasizes another encounter with Duke, the pool-player crow who met his vividly-dramatized death in Bakshi's original *Fritz the Cat*. Vitello rejoined Bakshi on *Wizards*, animating Blackwolf for almost the entire film including the climactic showdown between Blackwolf and Avatar, plus scenes featuring the elf barbarian Weehawk and other elves, demons and creatures. After completing work on *Wizards*, Vitello went to Richard Williams' *Raggedy Ann and Andy* where his major sequence is Ann and Andy escaping from the depths of a villainous taffy pit—an ever-metamorphosing mass of living, talking taffy that requires animation filling the whole screen with constant movement.



Members of Avatar's fighting legion—a fairy warrior and desert elf wacs

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■ Tasia Williams attended Pierce College 2½ years as an art major and in 1966 went to work for Hanna-Barbera where she spent three seasons in the studio's special effects department. There she created the cel paintings used for animation of fire, smoke, water, explosions, wind, dust storms, bubbles, transparent clouds, cyclones and other effects requiring specialized rendering techniques. When the market for television cartoons dropped sharply in 1969, she left animation and went to Hawaii where for a few years she freelanced as a watercolor portrait artist. In 1974 she was back at H-B special effects for four months, the studio's shortest season up to that time. This was followed by painting cels five weeks each on *Coonskin* and *Hey Good Lookin'*. She returned to Bakshi for *Wizards* as inker, xerox checker and cel painter, finally assigned to her own inking department in tandem with the ink & paint staff headed by Jan Cummings—all putting in a demanding 3-months of 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week, to meet *Wizards'* fast-approaching deadline. When 1000 cels still needed to be painted for the battle scenes, with only eight days left on the schedule, Bakshi bet Williams it couldn't be done. She accepted the challenge, and she and her crew worked under pressure 12 hours a day for another week until the cels for this key sequence were finished, bringing *Wizards* in on time and within budget.

Such team effort is a good indicator of the spirit that went into the making of *Wizards* on all levels of production personnel. Successful commercial filmmaking is a collaborative medium, and animation in particular requires the individual talents of writers, artists, designers, musicians and technicians contributing to the whole. Ralph Bakshi, a hard-working director who oversees every facet of his films from conception to editing, has brought together and unified many talents for a motion picture that promises to add new dimension to the world of fantasy adventure and sword & sorcery. □

Weehawk's legion of barbarian elves

The good wizard Avatar

Opposite: Blackwolf's goons

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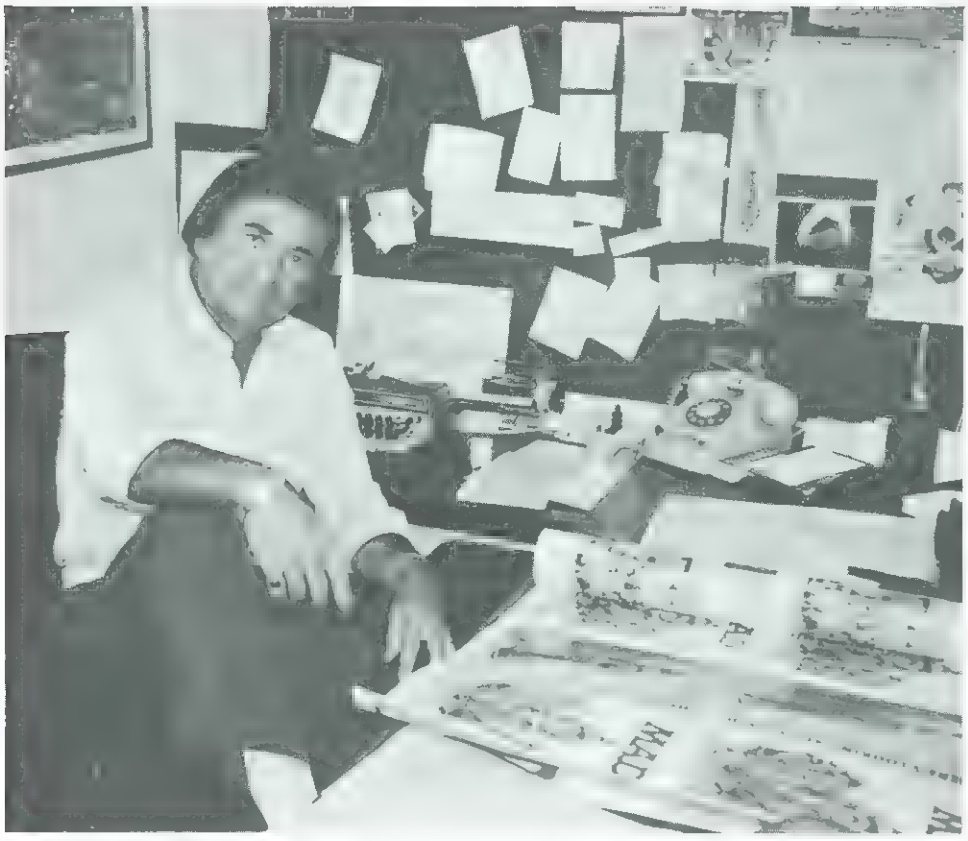
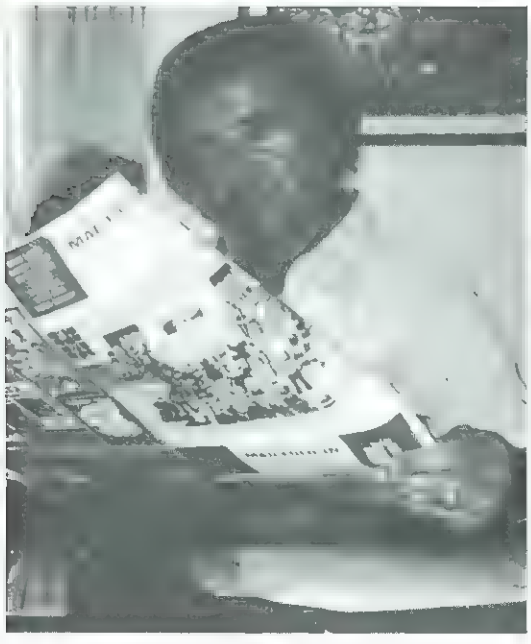
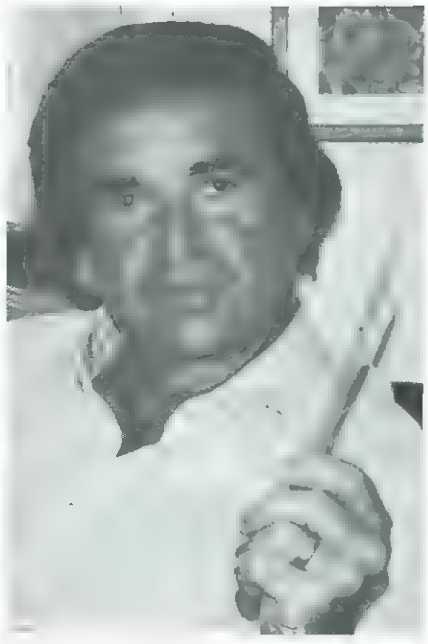
FANFARE INTERVIEW:



EDITOR OF MAD MAGAZINE

AL FELDSTEIN





CONDUCTED BY ED SPIEGEL

In 1948 Albert B. Feldstein went to work for William M. Gaines. Previously, Feldstein had been but one of a legion of comic book writer-artists, struggling to produce something of note in an industry where speed was commensurate with financial survival. Gaines was a publisher with very little experience and, according to industry grapevine, even less of a future. What he did have was the desire to produce quality comic books and, when another writer-artist named Harvey Kurtzman walked in the door, he also had the necessary editorial personnel.

It was 1950. I was 12 and growing weary of comic books. The idea *of comic books was still great. I still avidly checked out the new arrivals, but reading most of them was becoming a bore. I'd always been a fan of those comics I felt the creators were really involved with in some way. They were becoming fewer — or maybe I was just getting older.*

I began reading science fiction magazines, paperback novels, the classics. Another year and I'd probably have deserted comics entirely. But — the big but — EC came along. My first was Weird Science *#12 (the first issue) and I was hooked right on through the New Trend, New Direction and Picto-Fiction. I followed EC closely, saving their entire output.*

Occasionally I wrote them expressing my feelings, asking questions. A few times they published parts of my letters, but, more important, they'd write back. One of their replies shows EC's superiority over other publishers in a way that might not be apparent to today's readers. As a true fan I knew the order in which the titles came out. Frontline Combat *followed* Crime Suspenstories *within about a week. However, two weeks after buying* Crime *#10, there was no sign of* Frontline *#6. Two or three more ECs hit the stands in their usual pattern, skipping* Frontline *#6. Immediately I sent 75-cents for a subscription, asking that it begin with #6, explaining about my collection. They wrote back saying they couldn't start with #6 because they had none left and explained that on returns they received only the tops of the covers. I wrote more letters, and the desperation of my plight apparently got through because suddenly they answered that they would order the full returns this time and send me a copy of* Frontline Combat *#6 as soon as they were in.*

A month later my collection was once again complete. Not only did they create the best drawn, best written comics ever produced, they cared enough about their readers to go to such effort for me.

Feldstein edited crime, science fiction and horror, writing most of the scripts and nurturing a crew of superstar artists. Kurtzman did likewise with his war comics, soon joined by a humor title, Mad. *The EC line was small, but its impact was anything but.* Vault of Horror, Tales from the Crypt *and* Haunt of Fear *soon opened a new vista to the business, the other publishers flooding stands with horror comics of dubious merit and taste. Their customary short-sightedness brought down a wave of public furor on the beleaguered comic book busi-*

ness. And when the wave dissipated it left only a few so-called respectable houses that shielded themselves with a self-serving censorship board that tidily ostracized one William Gaines. His business in ruins, Gaines tried a few abortive publications before reluctantly parting company with Feldstein. All Gaines had to his name was Kurtzman's humor book, now a 25c black-and-white magazine. When Kurtzman made an exit, Gaines went to Feldstein to take over Mad, *and the rest is, if not history, then the next best thing.*

Twenty years later, Mad, *America's leading satirical periodical, is still assembled under Feldstein's careful, watchdog scrutiny. He has been described as a maniacal, dedicated worker, a description borne out by the difficulties in gaining this interview. In my work in radio and television I've met and interviewed many famous people including presidential candidates, top names and talents in all entertainment media, the arts and literature. Interesting work, but only part of the job and not that big a deal. In 1975 when I met Al Feldstein for the first time — 25 years after seeing his name and work in* Weird Science *— I must admit I was excited, and, unusual for me, more than a little nervous. We settled down in his office, talked into my tape recorder and finished with 2½ hours of discussion, from which the following was distilled for* Fanfare.

— Ed Spiegel

Let's start at the beginning — how you entered comics, what your first works were.

I was going to the High School of Music and Art when I heard there were these things called comic books and the people doing the artwork were getting as much as twenty dollars a page. One of the fellows in the school, Norman Maurer, had begun freelancing for comics. I had never read a comic book at that point — I don't know if it was because my parents were too poor to afford them or because I wasn't interested. But I got a few comics, did up some samples and went looking for work. I needed money for dates. I was going to school and there was a depression on, so money wasn't plentiful.

How old were you at the time?

Fifteen. This was in 1939. But I didn't get any freelance work because my art wasn't that good; it wasn't professional enough. I finally got a job with Eisner & Iger, a comic book art service. I started by erasing pages and running errands for Jerry Iger — this was just after he had split with Will Eisner. We knocked out pages for Quality Comics and Fiction House. It was good experience for me, but I really had taken the job just for the three or four bucks a week I got for going there after school.

We did *Sheena* and other Fiction House books which I don't even remember. When summer came, I asked if I could work full time and Jerry said okay. I started inking backgrounds and after a while it was the usual steps up — pencilling backgrounds, then inking figures. Eventually, I worked up to the point where I was doing almost the full job.

Did you ever do anything on Blackhawk or Doll Man?

Yes, Blackhawk. I can't remember if Iger was doing Doll Man at the time. We did some of the Fawcett characters, too. If you showed them to me, I guess it would come back.

So you never worked as an employee of Fiction House or Quality — it was strictly for the shop.

Right, for Jerry Iger. Of course, when I went to college, I couldn't very well work for him after school so I worked only one summer after that and then went into the Air Force. When I came out, I was married and I went back to Jerry and got a full-time job at fifty bucks a week. Eventually I left him to freelance. I worked for Ace and Sam Singer and then I started to do my own books, packaging for Fox — *Junior, Sunny* and *Corliss Archer.*

Feldstein's teen art for Victor Fox:
Top panel from *Sunny* No. 13, April 1948.
Second panel and cover from
Junior No. 16, July 1948

When did you begin writing for comics?

At Fox. I went up to see Victor Fox and I told him I packaged books. He asked me if I was a writer, as well as an artist, and I said my wife did the writing. Actually, I did it all — she didn't know beans about the business. The only things she wrote herself were the text pieces.

Why the pseudonym "Bill Brown" on the teenage books for Fox?

That was their gimmick in case I got cantankerous and demanding. They could just let me go and get some other artist and it would still be "Bill Brown." The industry at that time was a business where writers and artists were mostly working incognito. They also forced the artist to draw in a certain style to make everything have an overall level of sameness.

The erotic content of your teen books like Junior *was very strong compared to the other Archie imitations at the time.*

You mean the girls with tight sweaters?

And where the panties and stocking tops would show.

Yes, that's what we tried to sell the magazines with, aside from the possible humor. Fox was big on that kind of thing. While I was at Fox packaging teen books in that vein, I heard there was an outfit downtown looking for someone to do a teen book. The publisher had been killed in an accident and his son was taking over and changing the line around. So I went down and met the man who was running the company, Sol Cohen, and was introduced to the son — a big, fat, young man named Bill Gaines.

At what point did you give up freelancing and start working full time for Bill Gaines at EC?

We started to publish a teenage book when Sol Cohen got word that the market for this kind of material was slipping. They were afraid to put the book out, so I said I'd tear up the contract if I could do other things for EC. Gaines was very appreciative of that and it sort of cemented our relationship. He gave me work on his other books, doing crime and westerns.

It wasn't until later that you became an editor at EC, right?

Well, that was some time later. What happened was that Bill and I had conversations discussing the old days when we went to the movies to see *Frankenstein* or listened to ghost stories on the radio — and eventually we got to thinking we should try real gothic type horror in comic book form. Bill asked me to try it, and we came up with "The Vault of Horror" and "The Crypt of Terror" as departments within *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime.* Eventually the crime books were out and the horror comics were in and I was editing them — plus drawing stories and covers.

Do you have any theories as to what made for a good, salable comic book cover in those days?

It was all gut-feeling. My own personal approach to a cover was that it had to have a strong visual impact, something that would grab the interest of the reader. I did less and

less art as time went on because I was writing more of the books. But I tried very hard to convince Bill Gaines of some of my theories as to how artists should be treated. One of the things I wanted to encourage, and Bill agreed, was that the artist should develop his own style, rather than working in the accepted styles of the times. So we encouraged a Graham Ingels to go wild with his line work because my feeling was that a signature is a signature and you shouldn't ask anyone to do someone else's handwriting. When Jack Davis showed up I grabbed him because he had something very distinctive. We built up quite a stable of art stylists — Wally Wood, Reed Crandall, Johnny Craig, Al Williamson, Jack Kamen. . .

A theory about Kamen is that his main contribution at EC was conservative art as a change of pace between the more dramatic styles of the others, giving the books a structure they wouldn't otherwise have had, like an anthology of four one-act stage plays. Do you think there's any validity to this theory?

Well, yeah. We weren't quite as analytical as that. Jack's style was simple. Domestic, I would call it. He got all the stuff having to do with suburban love stories and romantic triangles. We plotted Kamen's story for Kamen, a Davis story for Davis. We kept in mind what they were best at. Kamen's style was apparent to us from the beginning, we knew he did interesting-looking gals, the style was clean and simple, but he couldn't really attain a gothic look that Ingels or Davis could.

To what extent if any did EC art have to be revised when it was turned in?

Very little. The pencil stage was where we made sure the artists captured elements needed to progress the story. As far as the extra stuff they put in, I never had any objection to it. It gave the artist a feeling of accomplishment in contributing to the end result. The only time there'd be any changes was where things were destroying, overpowering or negating elements necessary for telling the story. And that goes today with *Mad*. It's been my philosophy from the very start, primarily because I was originally an artist myself.

Any artists give you trouble in meeting deadlines and so forth?

We had some problems with Graham Ingels in terms of his personal life, but there were never any real difficulties. Most artists were very professional. Later on there were some who were fantastically talented but also temperamental, and they gave us some heartaches and headaches occasionally. It was imperative to Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta that they did a job they would be proud of, and they sometimes went over deadline to accomplish it.

Any favorite EC covers come to mind as being standouts?

I don't know, that's hard to say. I like a lot of my early science fiction covers. They were very different from comic book covers done in the past. I was certainly influenced by Chesley Bonestell's science fiction paintings, and I tried to adapt that sort of look to *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* covers. As far as horror is concerned, Jack Davis was of course the best. My covers were a little more rigid than his. I just tried to get a kind of emotional feel out of the horror, trying to translate it and transmit it to the reader.

Were there any comic artists you would have liked to get on the EC staff but couldn't?

Jack Kirby would have been a good addition to our group, but he was working with Joe Simon at the time. We're talking about the '50s now. And neither Bill nor I wanted to expand too much. We wanted to be able to give each book individual attention and we had just the right number of artists and magazines.

Gaines has often said EC was proudest of its science fiction titles but they never sold well. First of all, what prompted you to start them?

A mutual interest in the art and story possibilities. We were both fascinated by the flying saucer reports and we had done a lot of reading in the field.

Why didn't they sell?

They didn't comform to acceptable children's comics of the time. We could have made them more salable by lowering their quality and turning them into space opera magazines. But we loved them the way they were and we couldn't bring ourselves to change our approach. We felt that as long as we were doing them we'd do them the way we wanted and hope they'd catch on. But they never did sell as well as the horror comics which kept us in the black. Bill Gaines had and still has a tremendous integrity in terms of what he'll do for a buck.

Some things he had to do because they meant the difference between publishing and not publishing. But once he was committed he would set a standard and wouldn't deviate from it. It would have been easy for Bill to be a big publisher like Marvel and just keep putting out more titles, imitating himself and flooding the market with horror. But he didn't want to publish junk, and that's why we had only three horror books. We wanted control over the quality.

Your horror books were way ahead of everyone else's in the same genre. Was this reflected in the sales?

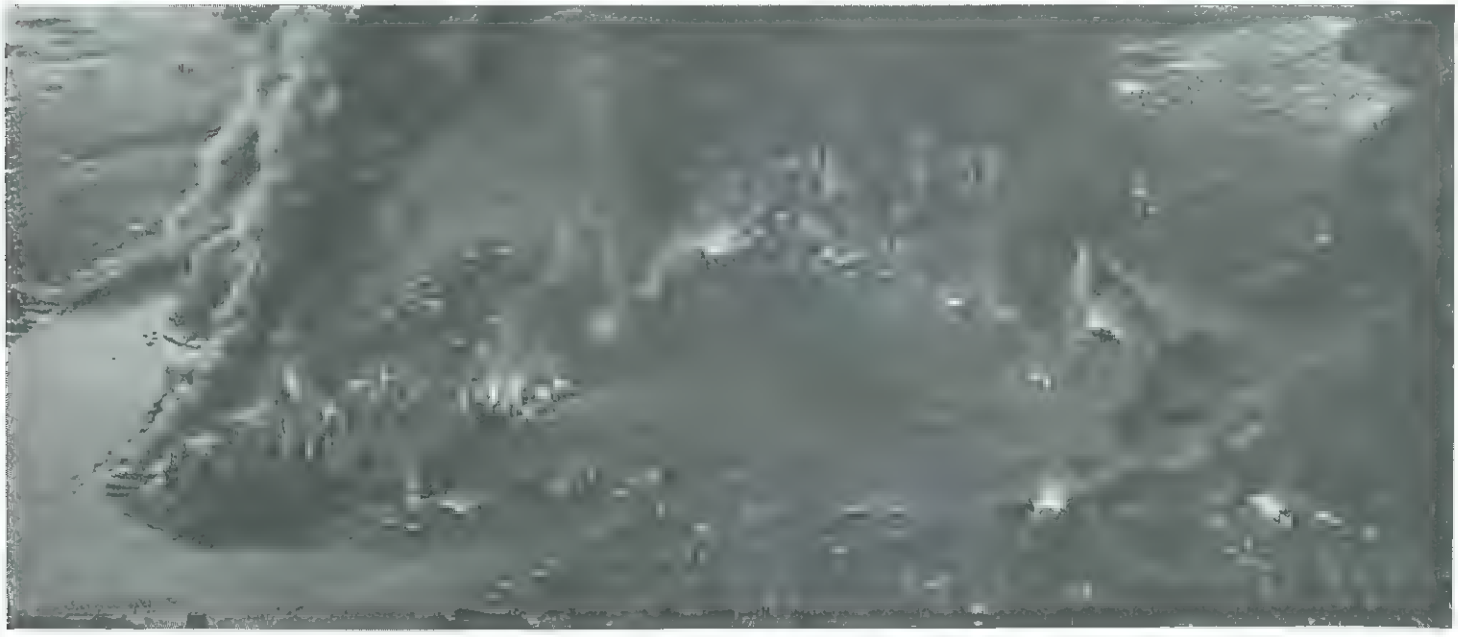
Yes, I think it was. We did sell better even distributing through Leader News, as we did, which was a very weak distributor that finally went bankrupt.

Who did your coloring before Marie Severin came on board?

The engraving plant. And that goes back to what I said before about control over the quality. There was no inspiration in the color the factory gave us, so we decided to do our own.

And why did you prefer mechanical Leroy lettering to hand lettering?

I didn't. I inherited that. When I joined Bill, they were already using it. I think it was a mistake.



Painting by Chesley Bonestell in *Collier's*, August 5, 1950: "Hiroshima, USA," showing Manhattan Island after an A-bomb attack. Opposite: Feldstein's Bonestell-influenced cover, January-February 1952.

The books Harvey Kurtzman edited used regular hand lettering.

Harvey didn't want any part of Leroy. But the fellow who did it for us, Jim Wroten, had this whole family arrangement and we didn't have the heart to take it away from them. Jim and his wife did it. We published all those years with it and I think it made the books appear a bit static. But there's another angle to examine, and that's whether the heavy captions I did would have been harder to read without it. It's not easy to sustain good hand lettering over a whole paragraph. Sometimes I really went overboard when I was futzing around with the Ray Bradbury adaptations.

Did you do all the stories in the horror and science fiction comics? I'm told other writers came in after a while.

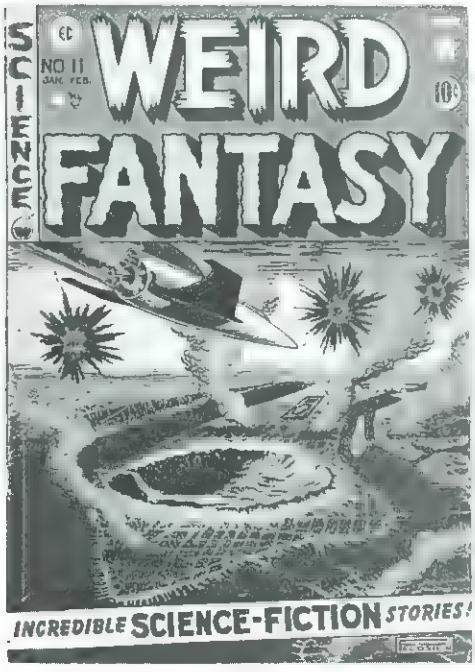
That's true. Eventually Bill and I were running out of steam on plots, so we got some other guys and we'd plot the stories with them and then, after they did the scripts, I'd break them down the way I'd used on all our stories. I would write out the story on the boards, visualizing it. Jack Oleck was practically on his own. He was really good and I had very few problems with his stuff. Carl Wessler plotted well and wrote well but I worked a little more on his stuff than I did Jack's. Gardner Fox wrote a few things for us, and we had Eando Binder's "I, Robot" series.

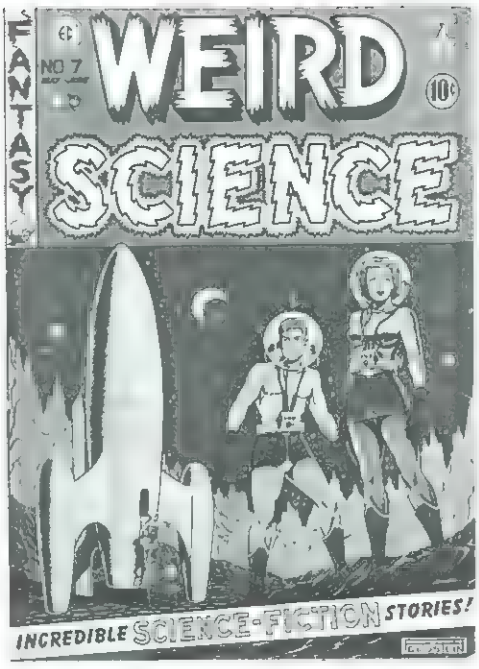
Are there any stories that you consider your best?

One day Bill and I just could not come up with a plot. Things weren't jelling and it was getting late so, finally, I said, "Oh, I'll just go and write something. Anything!" And I wrote "My World," which was really an exercise in writing more than anything else. It expressed for me the feeling I had about science fiction and I think it also summed up why we weren't going to lower our standards.

It's been reprinted many times.

The only thing that bothers me about resurrecting and reprinting this whole EC thing is





that a lot of times I see reference to Wally Wood's "My World," Joe Orlando's this or Jack Davis' that, and while it's true they illustrated the stories, they didn't write them and they didn't lay them out either. It's like what goes on in film criticism where directors are referred to as "auteurs" while the writers rarely get the credit they're due. But by the same token, writers will get as many razzberries as anyone when a movie or comic book turns out to be no good. This always seems to me a lopsided approach to the way critics function.

Any stories you were especially dissatisfied with?

Well, I'm sorry I wrote that baseball story, "Foul Play." It was just a little bit raunchy. You get into a certain frame of mind when you're close to something over a period of time. You're having a tongue-in-cheek approach to horror and you don't realize you're getting more and more numb to what you're being tongue-in-cheek about. The baseball story, to me, was absurd in terms of reality. It would have been worse if, say, Ingels illustrated it, but there's humor in it with Davis' art. That might have saved it somewhat. But when you step away and become a non-involved individual, reading it for the first time, it's an atrocity.

We had this same problem with the finger cover we did on *Mad* recently. It turned out to be a mistake because the adults who see what young people read interpret it a different way. What the finger meant in their day isn't what it means now. Someone holds up the finger today and it means "Nuts to you — go screw yourself." That's not what it means to a young wife when she recalls her necking days in the back seat of a car, which is where her association is, so that's the situation we run into every once in a while.

The same thing could have happened in the old days with horror comics. Someone picking up our horror stuff who's not followed its progress over the years and not being a fan and suddenly seeing the kinds of things we were writing in the later years would have been repulsed because they weren't schooled in how many changes and additions to old premises we were doing. That's where the problem was with Fredric Wertham and his followers.

When EC was at its peak and really rolling, around 1952, what did you feel the future held for EC?

My objective was getting out the next book as good as the last and the next story as good as the last. I'm not one to make great plans when I know things can change very quickly. I hoped we would continue to be successful, but if the horror trend ever started to die we would try to come up with something better. There were some exciting things happening which unfortunately never got off the ground. Because of the investigations and being forced to drop horror comics we entered into the New Direction line, and at that time an artist named Bernie Krigstein showed up who was very interesting. He and I were having some constructive and exciting and irritating arguments about the comic book medium. I remember giving him a 6-page story he was upset about, "Master Race," because it was inhibiting to him in terms of the artwork, so he asked permission to re-lay it out to a longer story. It's unfortunate we were at the end of our existence in comics because a whole new door opened to me personally, seeing what he did with layout and breakdown. I think I might have started to restrict my artists too much by writing onto the boards in pre-set layouts. He rebelled against it and we probably would have developed something out of this, another step in the way EC had been progressing toward additional impact in the way stories were presented.

Reading stories aloud for full impact is something you mentioned in your letters pages. Some fans feel that was a cop-out, imposing one medium onto another when it wasn't needed. Do you still think recitation of

The controversial finger cover that forced *Mad* to send letters of apology to many of its subscribers.

those stories would increase enjoyment and effectiveness?

I never particularly went for that suggestion. It wasn't mine. Bill and I would spend the morning plotting a story and I would go to my office and write it, then at about 5 o'clock plop it down in front of Bill who'd be waiting to see what I'd done. He would read it aloud. For some reason or other this was his way of enjoying it and getting the feel of it, and at the same time catching any editorial boo-boos I might have made. It was Bill who became convinced that reading it aloud provided the most enjoyment. There wasn't any need to, but in defense of Bill I think what he had in mind was a psychological feeling that what he was doing added a dimension to the comic that didn't exist by itself, the dimension of audio. Being that this was early into the television era, it was a method of approximating television by listening to the dialog/audio while looking at the panels.

If you mean we should have left it alone as an art form of its own, you're right. But I'm not a purist, and anything that makes anything better is fine with me.

Are there any kinds of stories you never had a chance to do at EC but wanted to try?

No, as a matter of fact we ended up doing virtually all the things we enjoyed doing. We developed what we called the "preachies" in *Shock Suspenstories* and we tried to have one in every issue. These were the forerunners of *Mad's* social consciousness — stories which talked about drug addiction, racial prejudice, narrow-mindedness, situations involving a question of morals and ethics.

Do you feel your point of view in those stories were making social statements different from Kurtzman's in his war books?

Well, I know the point of view we took I felt very strongly about. That's why I did them. It was a chance to say something, an added element in comics not present up to that time.

In the old days there was a kind of low-grade patriotism coming through, but no social comment or the criticism we tried to instill into them. That, too, was developing then, but was suddenly cut off.

As far as what Harvey was saying and concerned with, I agreed. He was doing terrific anti-war stories before there was a real anti-war movement.

Was it just coincidence that both you guys had some things to say and happened to both be at EC, or was this because of the general philosophy of the company?

I don't know. Harvey and I went to the same high school, we came from the same ethnic background, we were born in the same city, we had the same economic problems, we were about the same age. We talked a lot together. We were having a discussion about his new humor magazine which was going to satirize comics, and I distinctly recall begging him to expand it into social comment on the American scene. I talked to him about doing things on supermarkets, conspicuous consumption, planned obsolescence, things like that. He accepted this, and began to work it into *Mad* after the first few issues.

I was doing this myself in *Panic*, too, but I think *Panic* never really compared to *Mad*, though I had hopes it would. I did *Panic* in one week, Harvey did *Mad* in two months. *Panic* was one of seven comics I was writing, and Harvey by that time had given up the war books and was only doing *Mad*.

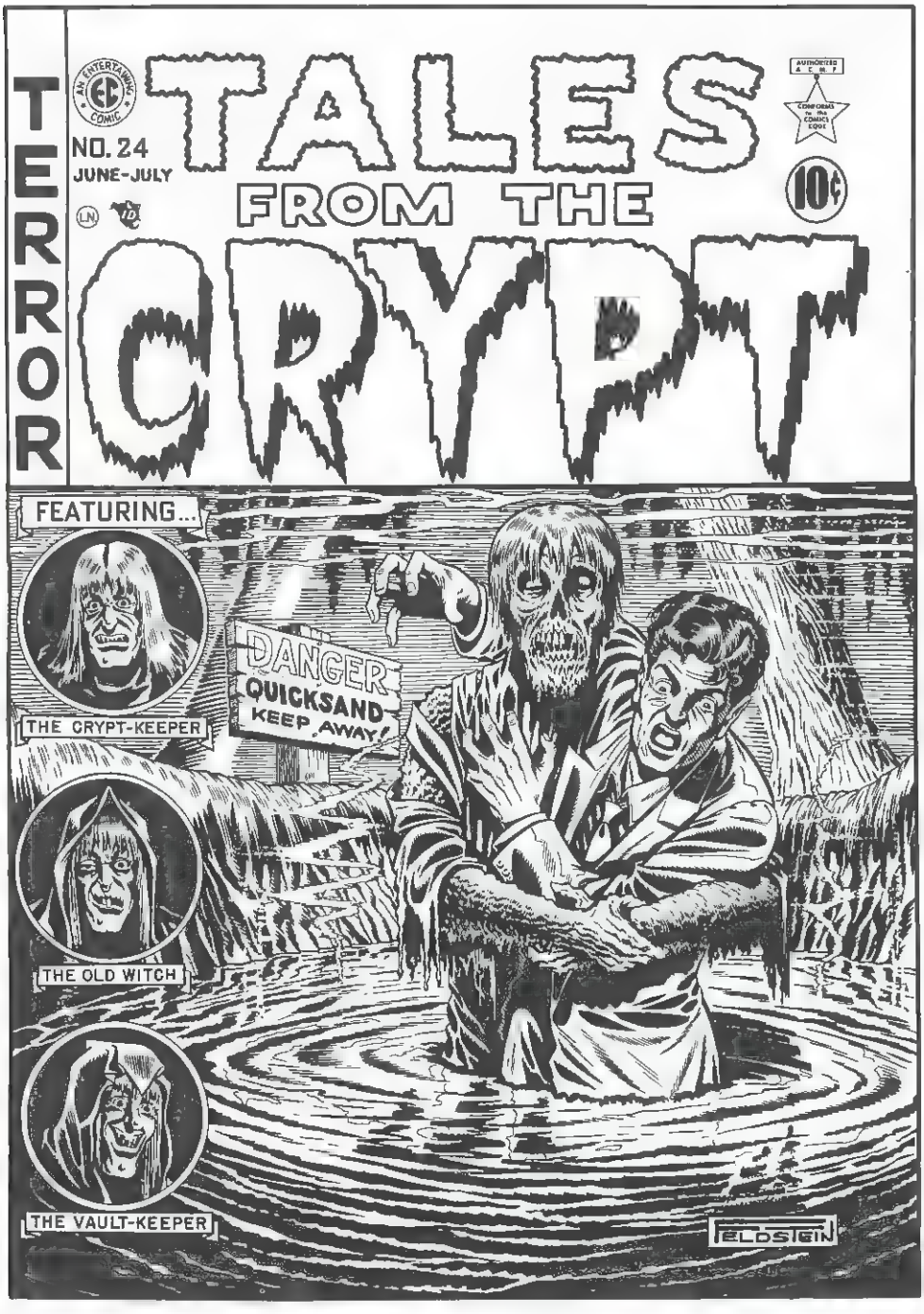
Did reader feedback influence material in EC comics?

I don't remember how much if at all letters influenced us. Bill and I didn't rely on them, we did what we thought was good. This goes for today, too. I've written and edited all my adult life in this business, and I've always done things on a spontanaeity basis. I've done things I felt was right. I edit *Mad* now the way pilots used to fly their planes, by the seat of my pants. Only where there's a concern over opinion against something, then I again reconsider what I'm thinking or what I'm doing.

How do you feel about the comic book art form and its progress, or lack of it, since the 1950s?

Publishers made a grievous error when the ax fell on horror comics. They didn't support Bill Gaines' position and, by their actions, castrated this industry. They permitted this industry, which had a great potential of becoming an adult visual entertainment form, to be relegated back twenty years to childish nonsense. They're starting to come out of it now, but it's a pity all those years were wasted. The visual format doesn't belong exclusively to the world of a child any more than television or movies do.

I don't pay much attention to comics these



EC in 1955: Gloria Orlando (subscription dept.)

Publisher Bill Gaines

Nancy Siegel (mail-order, subs, fan-mail depts.)

days.

Neither do I. They could be made a lot more exciting than they are. One reason they aren't, and I think this is really sad, is that the writers still don't get paid what the artists get paid. When I first started to write my stuff, I was getting one-fourth or one-fifth of art rates for writing, which was kind of ridiculous. I kept insisting the writing is as important as the artwork and that no artist sells a book unless the writing is there. I've had experience that has backed up this theory. Jack Davis is a great artist, but he left us for a while and worked for some *Mad* imitations. And he couldn't do a thing to save the garbage they were giving him to illustrate. So he came back to *Mad* and now he's doing good things with good material. And that's why today at *Mad* the writers get the same high rate the artists get.

That's unusual in the industry?

Very much so. And I'll tell you about another strange thing in the comic book business today. I understand that at Stan Lee's outfit, Marvel, the writer writes a synopsis and then it's turned over to an artist who lays it out. Then the writer has to write to match the drawings. I can't think of a more asinine way of working. It's like Gregory Peck walking in front of a camera and doing what he feels like doing based on a premise, then having the writer write the dialogue afterwards. It's sheer idiocy.

The business is strictly mass production. They get it out as quickly and as cheaply as possible.

There's certainly something wrong with the adoration given to the artist and the inequity with the writer. And I don't understand why, after the history of EC shows that writing was what really sold the magazines. The art was great, and our artists could have gotten work anywhere, but I don't think there would be the following there is today if those guys hadn't been drawing good scripts. And none of them — this is strictly my opinion — none of them would have done the quality work they did for EC's New Trend and New Direction.

How did you come up with the concepts for the New Directions?

That was a question of what we thought could be interesting and still be "Code Approved." We were forced into doing them. I must say our enthusiasm was not as great as it was in the horror days. Bill had a whole stable of artists and writers he felt personally responsible for and he wanted to keep their incomes going, so everything was done with that in mind. Realistically, from a business standpoint, he would have been better off shutting down, watching and waiting.

As for *Psychoanalysis*, one of the reasons it came about was because Bill and I ourselves had gone into analysis for various personal reasons. *Psychoanalysis* was really an attempt at promoting the beneficial aspects of psychotherapy. At the same time I thought it would be an interesting subject for the New Directions, and I still think the comic was years ahead of its time. After the second issue Steve Allen got in touch with us, saying he wanted to do something based on *Psychoanalysis* for his tv show. I collaborated with Howard Rodman on the first script, Rodman wrote the second one, and I wrote the third. These were dramatized in 30-minute segments called "The Psychiatrist" on Allen's *Tonight Show* about 1955. I think those were also ahead of their time. They didn't catch on with the Allen audience, but they were forerunners of television series that came later, *The Eleventh Hour* and *Breaking Point*.

When the New Directions folded you were out of work until taking over Mad.

That's right. I was looking for other things to do for about a two month period. I wouldn't have had any trouble doing freelance writing, but I was looking for something a little more in the creative end of it, becoming a packager or an experimenter. I proposed to Jack Lebowitz at DC and Martin Goodman at Marvel that they let me establish an experimental unit where we could try new books, new methods of doing comics, new subjects, and so on, in an effort to develop readership. I could not touch first base with these people. It's very interesting about talent and about people's reaction to you when you've been earning a living at something that was getting bad press in the media. I was not happily received because I was involved in the whole horror comics thing. Unfortunately publishers did not see the handwriting on the wall the way I saw it. I was trying desperately to resurrect the industry into something exciting again, and DC and Marvel wouldn't have any part of it.

But it was a good break for me because I did get someone very interested in my ideas. They were talking numbers. When I came back from one of those meetings Bill Gaines was waiting for me in the train station, and that's when I found out he and Kurtzman had a falling out on *Mad*, and he asked me if I'd like to come back to work for him.

What were your immediate thoughts and feelings about taking over Mad *after Kurtzman left?*

I didn't want to make the mistakes Harvey had started to make. When I took over editorship I knew the potential of it, because it was there all the time. Harvey had pointed the way, but also he had veered from what I thought was the way to go. I tried to get the best writers I could. I also tried to give it an accepted feel by having establishment names write for it like Orson Bean, Ernie Kovacs, Jean Shepherd, Bob and Ray.

Mad *has developed a certain uniform look to each issue —a movie satire, a TV satire, five pages of David Berg, a fold-in and so forth. Do you think your readers expect the same format each issue?*

We've struggled with all kinds of presentations and everything we did was, at one time, an innovation. We initiated the "primer" idea,

we inititated the "coloring books." We've tried everything in the way of new and different features. I think the movie satires are an integral part of the magazine and I'd hate to see them go. But I'd drop them if I thought the readers were sick and tired of them. I'm open to suggestions for new kinds of things and all I require is that it be funny and in good taste. I wouldn't want to enter areas the *National Lampoon* has gone into. That's not my cup of tea.

Has the Lampoon's *success influenced you?*

It's shown me what I don't want to do.

Do you like the magazine?

Personally? No. There's a point at which something is no longer funny because of its sheer shock value and this, coming from an old horror writer, I guess it doesn't sound like it makes much sense. But there's a difference between being shocked by a horror story and entertained by a humor magazine. A humor magazine has to be gentle; the reader has to identify with it. The *National Lampoon* is extremely iconoclastic and I get the impression it's like a bunch of kids trying to shock their parents.

With Mad *today, you don't seek the acclaim that could be yours. Your name is not the household word it could be if you wanted the limelight.*

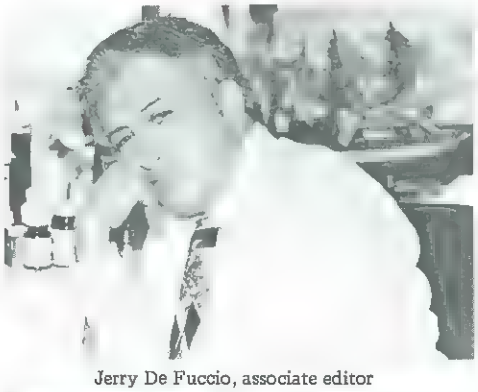
That's true. I've often wrestled with the whole concept of ego gratification as opposed to professional accomplishment. I separate my professional life from my private life. *Mad* is a career, I earn a good living by it, it satisfies me professionally and creatively. And then I have my private life. A few years ago I started to appear on television and radio shows as the editor of *Mad* and I suddenly realized that what happens with these things is that there really isn't time to present the whole picture. I would not for a moment try to detract from the contributions made by writers and artists to *Mad* — it's a big team effort and no one individual can take full credit for it. That's why I stopped doing TV appearances. Also, I felt that sort of thing didn't sell a magazine. Another reason is, I'm not a speaker. I could probably do a lecture tour the way Al Capp did, but I don't have the desire to do it from an income standpoint, and I don't have the ego drive.

Mad *has had virtually no big staff upheavals in 15 years or more, with the same editor and same artists; occasionally some new writers, but they're making attempts to emulate the old writers.*

I don't think they're making attempts. I'm anxious to get new writers with new ideas. I really am. Everything that comes in from outside my professional sources, unsolicited manuscripts, is read and evaluated. When people show any spark, we encourage them because I'm anxious to find more writers like we found originally. Larry Siegel, Stan Hart and Arnie Kogen came to *Mad* through the mails. I think it's true there's less chance of new artists breaking in than new writers. The writers door is wide open. The artists door is slightly ajar.

Do you have any statistics on who reads Mad?

Bill Gaines, *Mad* publisher



Jerry De Fuccio, associate editor

John Putnam, art director

EC alumnae Jack Davis and Marie Severin at the 1972 EC Convention in New York City.

Not really, because we've never done any kind of scientific polls. In fact, I'm glad we haven't because in a way I'd hate to know exactly what the magazine's readership is. I don't want to start thinking clinically about it. I prefer catering to just me, Bill Gaines, Jerry DeFuccio, John Putnam, the *Mad* gang — like I did with EC comic books, It's really the only way to work. Statistics and computers take all the creativity and spontanaeity out of anything.

You've been working with Bill Gaines since 1948 and, obviously, you work well together. How would you define the reason for your successful relationship?

That's a hard one to answer fully since it's something that's changed over the years. In the beginning it was a compatible collaboration on the creative end. But, with the advent of *Mad*, Bill withdrew from the creative end because he was smart enough to know he didn't have an affinity for this kind of magazine. He enjoys publishing it and he reads *Mad* as a fan does, at the very end of producing each issue. It's at this point that any "interference" occurs, but only for legal reasons or reasons of good taste — certainly not for reasons of political content. Politically, Bill and I are a little different these days but he dropped the whole thing in my lap and said "This is your baby." Since then I've had tremendous fun in the freedom to run this thing as I see fit.

Gaines knew he had something with potential.

Mad was new. It started the whole field. I remember conversations with Bill back when we were starting, when we were doing romance and crime because that was what was selling. And I said, "Let's not follow them — let them follow us. Let's innovate. Nobody's going to do a romance comic better than Simon and Kirby's. And no one's going to do a crime book better than the first one by Charles Biro. Let's put out something different." That was our philosophy then, and it's our philosophy today.

Just imitating something or the look of it or the superficial aspects is never going to make it successful. It's like taking a Cadillac and saying "Let's turn out a car like it but we'll make the body out of paper-mache." So it looks like a Cadillac, but it's running with a rubber-band motor. If the guts aren't there, if the weight isn't there, it's not going to be successful. I've watched the imitations of *Mad* and what they do. They have a series of departments and a face on the cover like Alfred E. Neuman and they get someone who can draw like Don Martin. They do the TV and movie take-offs. But imitations never equal the original. *Mad* sells almost three million copies an issue. The nearest competitor is like one-fifth of that.

That's why people remember your horror comics from the '50s and few of the others. Yours were the best and the first. So now they've even made movies of them. What do you think of the two recent movies made from EC stories?

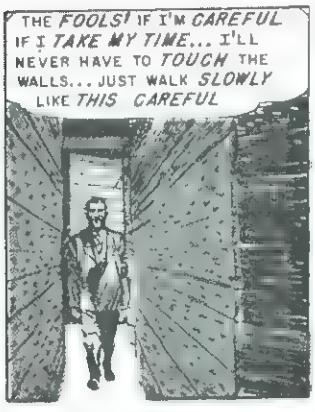
- Al Feldstein's Crypt Keeper
- Jack Davis' version
- Ralph Richardson in the 1972 Amicus film *Tales From the Crypt*

Panels from the original EC stories and their *Tales From the Crypt* film versions:

Graham Ingels ("Poetic Justice," *Haunt of Fear* No. 12, 1952) and Peter Cushing

OH, LORD! ENID! ENID! YOU WISHED ME ALIVE. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE! WHY DIDN'T YOU LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE? OH, LORD THE PAIN!
WHAT IS IT, JASON? WHAT'S WRONG?

Ingels ("Wish You Were Here," *Haunt of Fear* No. 22, 1953) and Barbara Murray, Roy Dotrice



George Evans ("Blind Alleys," *Tales From the Crypt* No. 46, 1955) and Nigel Patrick

I thought *Tales from the Crypt* was very well done. Some of the scenes even looked like panels from the original comics, especially with the story I'd done in an early EC, "Reflection of Death." I was disappointed in the second one, *The Vault of Horror*. Something was lacking in it. They missed the kind of feeling we had in the originals. Granted, a motion picture requires an entirely different approach, and they had to fill out various stories with more material, but in doing that they lost the original atmosphere for some reason or other. Actually I think they're missing a bet by not doing our science fiction, what with the current trend in that area, but because *Vault of Horror* wasn't a financial success it inhibits them from attempting another. Personally I feel one of the difficulties was when we sold the adaptation and name rights we didn't have enough of a hand in production. There were a lot of things I would've done differently. But, being made by an English studio, we couldn't stick our two-cents in and kibbitz. That's another angle, too, the adaptations being transposed to an English setting definitely took some effectiveness away. A lot of our original stories were based more in the feel of Americana — urban melting-pot dramas with horror overtones, and a sort of Middle West Gothic in the Jack Davis style. Of course our Bradbury horror and suspense adaptations also furthered this element.

Now that Mad *is a huge commercial success and has this tremendous cult following, which do you think will stand in the long run as the most critically acclaimed —* Mad *magazine or EC comics?*

I think *Mad* will someday be acknowledged as a great opinion maker of the '60s and '70s and, I hope, of the '80s. It's going to be recognized as having contributed tremendously to the changes in our society over the last two decades without being revolutionary, without being destructive, working within the confines of the democratic process, by alerting and educating people about some of society's ills. For instance, I think we've done a lot in advertising by making fun of it and contributing toward its change, like our anti-cigarette features.

Bill Gaines has said the EC New Trend comics have brought him more personal satisfaction than Mad. *How about you?*

Well, Bill participated in the creative end of EC comics, so that's very understandable. From my personal point of view I feel I've done more important work with *Mad* than with the ECs. At EC I turned out horror stories that were fun and entertaining, but with *Mad* I reach more people in terms of having some effect on the change of social and emotional outlook, therefore it gives me a greater satisfaction. Whatever things I've done over the years, at the time I did them I thought they were adequate and a day later I thought they were inadequate. Anything I've done was for the moment, and it's my gut feeling that I really wouldn't like anything to be representative of my potential. I know my potential is greater.

A TIME FOR PANIC

BY REGGIE CAPES

When browsing through a *Mad* special with a color bonus from comic book issues, this reader imagines one with this cover blurb:

Bonus 1950s-Type Comic Inside! MAD opens the closet and lets out our long-hidden sister: it's time for PANIC, gang!

Blurbs on the page facing the bonus comic add:

PANIC, the only authorized imitation MAD ever had, returns from the 1950s. After reading these stories, you'll know why we kept her hidden away all these years: they're really bad!

All kiddin' aside, MAD editor Al Feldstein wrote 'em, and mostly the same idiots who did MAD in those days drew 'em. We are proud to present the best of PANIC as an extra treat for our readers, for a nostalgic glimpse into our past and mainly because this way we get back some of the money we lost on this rag!

The cover or the facing-page illustration shows a red-faced Alfred E. Neuman vainly trying to keep stacks of *Panic* comics from spilling out of his closet, in full view of guests who gasp, gape and gawk at his secret shame.

My fantasy, dreamed of for years, should materialize, because *Mad's* debt to *Panic* is long overdue for payment. *Mad* owes *Panic* for at least a measure of its fame, and most certainly for its very life at one time. Feldstein, Publisher William M. Gaines and the majority of EC fans share the debt.

No doubt, some fans will question the charges made and will raise objections, minor and serious, to the proposal.

Let us dispose of the minor objections first.

Purists may question whether *Mad* should reprint *Panic* material under its banner. Obviously, Gaines publishes only *Mad* today, so where else? So long as blurbs clearly indentify the original source of the material, the sanctity of both titles' archives remain intact. EC fans should not object, and certainly most *Mad* readers, who are not necessarily EC fans, would not worry about it.

This brings us to the question of whether today's *Mad* readers would *want* to see the old *Panic* stories, perhaps an imagined objection which may have prevented Gaines and Feldstein from acting before now (admittedly postulated without benefit of inside counsel with them).

Specific *Panic* stories will be discussed, but now it is enough to say that if non-fan *Mad* readers enjoy the reprints from early issues, and clearly they do because Gaines keeps republishing them, then readers certainly would enjoy the better *Panic* stories. These stories equal the best from early *Mad* issues, in scripting, artwork and hilarity. They should not be denied to today's *Mad* readers.

The question of dated material, an adjunct to the same objection, is academic. Just as *Mad's* stories remain timeless, so do *Panic's*. To choose just two examples, "My Gun is the Jury" and "African Scream" could as well have been written today: Mickey Spillane's books remain in print, and *The African Queen* plays regularly on TV. Time apparently has claimed as victim only the *Mad* story, "What's My Shine," about the McCarthy hearings, which disappeared from later printings of an early series *Mad* paperback.

Equally minor objections some fans may raise include the low prices for *Panic* and the high prices for *Mad* in the Overstreet *Comic Book Price Guide* and the death of *Panic* after only 12 issues, as if these were reasons to ignore the material.

Diverse factors, both real and artificial, determine the price of back issues, so many unrelated to the quality of the work, that this objection is summarily dismissed.

As for *Panic's* death after 12 issues, a combination of insidious business practices by some wholesalers and retailers, encouraged by the Comics Code Authority, and the general malaise caused by outside pressure that was infecting EC staffers in those days killed their comic book titles in 1955-56. *Panic,* originally a New Trend, hanging on as a New Direction comic, died with them.

Who is to say whether *Panic* might have flourished, perhaps even to rival *Mad* in the slick market, had not it been caught in EC's collapse? *Mad* escaped this fate by chance alone, because Editor Harvey Kurtzman earlier had insisted on producing a slick, for reasons quite apart from fear of the Code.

Minor objections aside, now comes the big one, the one most often voiced by fellow fans to this writer whenever he has mentioned his dream.

Some say that *Panic* was not as good as *Mad*. Bluntly, they say that Feldstein could not write humor as well as Kurtzman.

This writer submits that those fans are falling into a subjective trap; when they say, "Kurtzman was a better writer than Feldstein," they really are saying, "I prefer Kurtzman. . ." This writer is a Kurtzman fan, yet he recognizes that Feldstein was equally as talented. Undeniably, Feldstein was the more prolific writer as well.

Kurtzman and Feldstein differ not in ability, but in style. Feldstein was subtle, relying on carefully contrived, convoluted conversation and situation and, quite successfully, the "running gag" device. Kurtzman prefered the building and stretching of absurdity to its most impossible limits, and was a master of word-play. Both had that indefinable knack which can be described as "the EC touch." Feldstein's work does not suffer from a comparison of styles.

Feldstein's work *did* suffer from about the time the Code affixed its seal and restrictions on *Panic,* with issue number nine. For example, Feldstein was forced into an absurd explanation to convince the kiddies that the Captain in "20,000 Leaks Under the Sea" (#11) was drinking *root* beer, nothing stronger, at the climax of the "half-a-head" sketch. Given the Code restraints and the other pressures on EC in those days, no writer could excel, not Feldstein, not Kurtzman, not anyone who had worked only so recently under such editorial freedoms as had never before existed in comics. Such pressure would have stifled a Steinbeck!

Feldstein has been quoted as saying that he

"20,000 Leaks" with Code-revised dialog.

COOLY...DELIBERATELY... WITHOUT THE FAINTEST SUSPICION OF EMOTION IN HIS VOICE, CAPTAIN MENO GIVES HIS ORDERS TO THE HELMSMAN...
HALF AHEAD!
AYE, AYE, SIR!
HALF AHEAD!
HALF AHEAD IT IS, SIR!
AH! THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE IT! WITH JUST HALF A HEAD!
YES, SIR! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A NICE COLD GLASS OF ROOT BEER WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING GIANT SQUIDS, I ALWAYS SAY!
WELL...CHUG-A-LUG!

had "only a limited feel for humor writing," as reported by Frank Jacobs in his 1972 book, *The Mad World of William M. Gaines.* He unnecessarily short-changed himself with that remark.

Earlier, pre-Code issues of *Panic* featured some screamingly funny stories, funny because of the writing alone, to say nothing of the excellent artwork. Had there been no *Panic* at all, the stories easily could have filled *Mad.*

There are stories enough for several reprint specials, but here are my favorites and my reasons. Vote for you own when writing to Feldstein and Gaines to ask for the *Panic* tribute:

1) "African Scream"—easily the best-written parody, superior to many of *Mad's* early movie parodies, with brilliant artwork by Wallace Wood. Who can forget those engine sounds?

2) "The Night Before Christmas"—second on my list only because Feldstein did not originate the text. Nevertheless he embellished the poem with devastating effect—it was to make *Panic* more famous than *Mad* for awhile (more about that, later). Bill Elder must have been quite insane when he illustrated this one—delightfully so!

3) "The Lady or the Tiger"—hilarious retelling of an old fable. The manufactured climax to the original is sheer inspired lunacy, with Elder obviously having a ball drawing it. This one is worthy of a *Monty Python* TV sketch.

4) "My Gun is the Jury"—This one is more of a *Shock SuspenStories* item than a satire, especially the ending, but nevertheless it should be included for its ever-pertinent commentary on popular literature. Jack Davis' art lends itself well to the subject matter.

5) "Little Red Riding Hood"—Feldstein proved that it was possible to satirize a satire, a "Grim Fairy Tale." Jack Kamen's girls, little and large, are cute. To this day, this writer chuckles uncontrollably over the running gag about the "impenetra—impenetra—thick forest."

Space does not permit going into detail about other favorites, such as "Breakfast with the Fershlugginers," "Comeback Little Streetcar" and "Strike It Richly." The last story mentioned presaged Feldstein and Gaines' delight in self-parody, which was to become *Mad's* longest-running gag in later years.

Mad almost did not have those later years, and if *Panic* had not existed at one time, *Mad* might have died. To elaborate on earlier statements:

While going through a "growing up period," when presumably he was "too old to read comic books," this writer still remembered certain funny stories he had read as a child, namely, "The Night Before Christmas" and "The Lady or the Tiger." He was positive that he had read them in *Mad.* When he began to collect comics, he sought out *Mad* to enjoy rereading them.

He was wrong, of course, but *Panic's* brilliance had been credited to *Mad.* He knows of other fans who had made the same error, quite simply because *Mad* was still around and *Panic* was not. No one can estimate how many others remembered the great old *Mad*—while thinking of *Panic* stories.

The degree to which erroneous identification contributes to a magazine's fame may be debated, but not its basic truth.

More substantially, *Panic* #1 contributed to *Mad's* fame (and all other EC titles) by being banned in Massachusetts by humorless legal authorities, who were appalled at the treatment of "The Night Before Christmas." "My Gun is the Jury" in the same issue almost resulted in the arrest of Gaines (see Jacobs book). No other single EC title, including *Mad,* can claim that distinction.

Panic's notoriety unquestionably helped *Mad* and other EC titles in those days by attracting readers who wanted to see what the fuss was about. Some of them perhaps mistook *Mad* for *Panic,* and others, after reading *Panic,* wanted *Mad* also. Again, only the degree may be debated.

Most conclusive and documented is the fact that *Mad* would have died had *Panic* never existed.

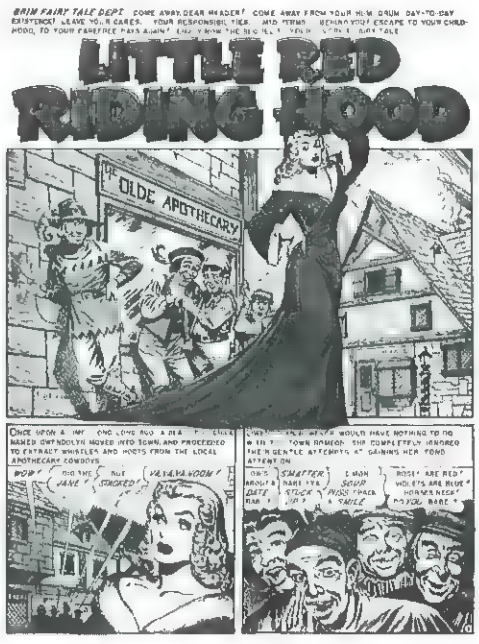
Jacobs' book tells how Gaines, beset with problems, thought he would have to kill *Mad* after Kurtzman departed. Gaines believed Kurtzman *was Mad,* and no one else could handle it. A business associate told Gaines to "get Feldstein," adding that he "could never tell the difference" between Feldstein's *Panic* and Kurtzman's *Mad* (admitting that he was not the average reader).

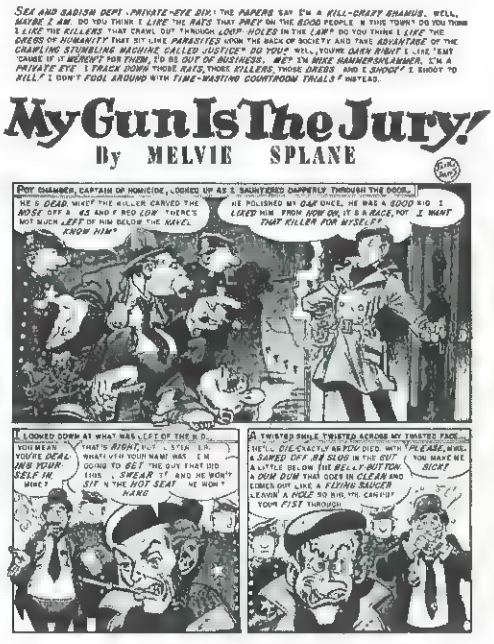
Gaines got Feldstein, but even then did not know if he would continue *Mad.* Former *Panic* editor Feldstein convinced Gaines that they could make *Mad* go. Feldstein was right.

Mad's debt to *Panic* is clear and valid.

Unless there are legal or copyright problems about which this writer has no inside information, then the time has come for Gaines and Feldstein, through *Mad,* to pay a debt which has grown large and grows larger with each day.

Indeed, it is a time for *Panic.* □





SUPERHEROES OF TV

BY MARK EVANIER

On a certain Wednesday evening in 1966, January 12 to be exact, every comic book fan across this glorious land of ours was in approximately the same locale: Parked in front of the television set. Batman was coming on TV.

The announcement had come a few months earlier. Twentieth-Century Fox Studios were readying a twice-weekly Batman cliffhanger as mid-season replacement fodder for ABC. This, after all, was at a time when ABC seemed to live on not only mid-season replacements, but *mid*-mid-season replacements as well. Wednesday and Thursday evenings, come 7:30, would be designated for exploits of the comic book field's second most popular action hero — soon to be Number One for a brief faddist spell. Adam West (who sounded vaguely familiar) would play the title role, and Burt Ward (who didn't) would play Batman's loyal Watson, Robin the Boy Wonder. Producer William Dozier signed Frank Gorshin to play the Riddler, a fairly minor Batman villain who happened to be the antagonist of the first Batman comic Dozier had read startlingly recently. Burgess Meredith would play the Penguin, Batman's second-string foe. And Cesar Romero, of all people, would guest as Batman's arch-antagonist, the Joker. Gorshin and Meredith were reasonable choices, but Romero should have been the tip-off that the powers that be on the Batman show were blissfully ignorant of the character's past heritage. Or, more to the point, that they really didn't give a damn.

From the first squib in the *TV Guide* TV Teletype until that fateful Wednesday was a long period of expectations. Batman, after all, had always been a comic book favorite. Something about the character made him continue on when other costumed crusaders were proving to be not nearly as invulnerable as their creators had hoped. Even a long period of stagnant scripts and barely-passable artwork in the comics had failed to diminish this appeal. Batman's longevity record was surpassed only by Superman in their respective field.

Every Batmaniac on or about the continent found an excuse that Wednesday to be nowhere but in front of a TV set, perhaps with a tape recorder pressed up against the speaker. The debut was not without its labor pains, however. Vietnam paled in comparison that week to the news that some ABC affiliates were refusing to clear time for the Batman show.

For ABC, it was nothing new. From its inception the American Broadcasting System has had a long history of rebellion among its member-stations. CBS or NBC affiliates gen-

erally follow the network's dictates with regards to scheduling, especially in prime time. That's because CBS and NBC shows usually make money. But ABC had a wretched track record, and local stations usually stood more profit potential by taking the maverick approach and pre-empting whatever seemed less than promising on the network schedule. When Dick Cavett took over the late-night spot against Johnny Carson, it was after Cavett had failed twice — once with a morning show and later with a thrice-weekly prime-time offering. It was small wonder that so many ABC affiliates had no confidence in Cavett; his station-clearance never approached ABC's maximum, much less Carson's total.

In the case of Batman, it had become an expensive show to produce, and Fox demanded a high price for it. The network had hopes for the show — their successes usually came from trendy adventure fare — so they utilized a since-tightened FCC loophole to add one more minute of commercial time. It paid for the production, but to the local ABC outlets it represented one more network encroachment on their finances. While the network execs thrashed it all out, frantic Batman fans looked to nearby cities for a channel airing Batman's premiere episode. A few made long pilgrimages to other towns and searched desperately for a motel with TV in every room. You can speculate on your own as to what kind of person would check into a motel room for a half hour to watch Batman.

There was an initial delight in seeing Batman on the screen; however, as the show unfolded, it became apparent that the producers had missed the concept of what few comic books they had bothered to peruse. (The first episode was freely adapted from the *Batman* issue on sale at the time planning had begun.) The TV moguls decreed the Batman show be played for "camp," a word that quickly became interchangeable with a similar word, "crap," to most comic fans.

Adam West bore a slight resemblance to the Bruce Wayne of the comic books. And he probably could have made a decent Batman, had he been a bit more muscular and a lot more serious. But they were playing the show as a joke, as a fad, as a put-on and, worst of all, as an insult to the viewers.

As for Burt Ward, it took a few weeks before a friend of mine, an avowed TV and movie buff, recalled where he had last seen Burt Ward. Burt Ward had sold him the house he was living in — built on a hillside such that the swimming pool had a shallow end and a deep end, even though it had been constructed for all one depth. Burt Ward was then Bert Gervis, selling real estate out of his father's agency. When the Batman show folded, some time later, he announced his future plans included a fat recording contract and a series of feature films he would write, direct and star in. He made one obscure record with Frank Zappa, parodying his "Boy Wonder" role and then, as far as anyone knows, immediately returned to selling real estate.

The show itself was a resounding hit, and that should negate certain arguments that it

Batman and Robin aboard the Batcycle.

Julie Newmar as the Catwoman.

was badly done. Yet success seemed to be based largely on what little of the comic book was kept intact; certainly, that was what all the merchandising was based on — costumes, character premises (however badly depicted), and colorful Bat-paraphernalia the show soon turned into a hokey *deus ex machina*. Contention is that the character of Batman was a hit — not the show's writing, acting or direction.

Most of the fans who collected the superhero related toys threw up their arms in financial surrender, thoroughly soured by the inundation of Batman books, puzzles, puppets, models, rings, you name it, et cetera. Scrooge McDuck couldn't have afforded them all, much less the loyal Batmaniac. Fortunately, there was no reason to buy most of them. Merchandisers have a curious manner about tying a product to a "name." Like TV producers, they never allow their line of work to get too intimate with the property they have chosen to exploit. They just slap the character name on whatever their stock-in-trade may be, thereby reducing the character from a fictional creation to some sort of Good Housekeeping seal of approval. Out came Bat-sponges, Bat-belts, Batman Bubble Bath and the like. A discotheque in San Diego painted its walls with slovenly-reproductions of comic book panels. A week before, the walls had been painted with slovenly renditions of James Bond stills.

The Batman craze brought comic book fans all manner of new, temporary prestige. But the problem was that it was almost wholly irrelevant to the reasons most of us had first taken interest in the field. Newspapers and magazines, writing as they intermittently do on the "comic book craze," concentrated on the "camp" qualities and depicted us all as closet Supermen. It was a relief from the usual articles focusing on exaggerated comic book prices — but not much of a relief.

Comic book fans, for the most part, are interested in wider acceptance of comic book material, not as "camp," but as an art form. And the Batman craze, for all its asinine self-derision, completely overlooked the viability of comic books as a story-telling medium. That was the frustration of it all.

Producers of the Batman program claimed it was a success because of what they had done to the character. Batman devotees claimed the show was a hit in *spite* of what had been done. No one, at least, argued about it being a success. A.C. Nielson had the definitive word on that, as he always does. But it can be argued that the producers' approach shortened the life span of the show in that they treated it as a fad that would endure only as long as the novelty held fresh. It can also be argued that, while the program and accompanying merchandising brought great revenue to National Periodical Publications, in the long run it was detrimental to the comic book business. It certainly didn't speak highly of comic books as an entertainment form.

The Batman TV show was not the first time a comic book hero had been brought to life and, admittedly, it probably wasn't the worst, either. Previous attempts had mostly been movie serials that lacked the funds Twentieth-

Century Fox threw behind their Batman TV program. Some of the serials hadn't been altogether awful since serials held so much in common with comics: powerful, righteous heroes, action, suspense and despicable villains.

When it became apparent the Batman show was a success, we all rationalized its failings: "At least it may inspire more shows taken from comic books, and maybe they'll be better." Not counting animated shows, it directly spawned exactly one — an ill-fated incarnation of the Green Hornet (not really a comic book character, but close enough), remembered only because Bruce Lee played Kato.

The various animated comic book shows can be easily discounted because handicaps saddling all recent efforts have given them no fighting chance at quality. Saturday morning animation is done on miniscule budgets with production crammed into a few months of the year, hampered by network dictates. But comic books that received live-action portrayals should have been decent.

It took until 1974 for two more to be attempted — Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel. And neither contained any semblance of what made the characters notable, and desired for wider acceptance, in the first place.

Wonder Woman was regenerated as an ABC Movie of the Week with Cathy Lee Crosby in the title role. Apart from a few names and the Amazon theme, everything from the comic books was jettisoned, including Wonder Woman's traditional costume and hair color. The story was negligible and, to simulate cliffhanging suspense, commercials were placed squarely in the center of the action-suspense sequences, rendering them disjointed and altogether pointless.

The most puzzling part of the whole project (and even people who worked on the show are still wondering about this) was why the big mystery villain, "Mr. Smith," was considered a mystery villain. The character was played by Ricardo Montalban, his name in the *TV Guide* listing and in the opening credits. But his face was kept carefully concealed throughout the early part of the show in the best B-movie tradition. As that tradition would have it, he would whirl around near the end and be revealed as the protagonist's brother or employer or perhaps the mayor and it would be quite a shock that the person least suspected was the master schemer. In the Wonder Woman TV-movie that cinematic mode was employed, Montalban's face kept hidden. But his voice was easily recognizable, and everyone knew it was Ricardo Montalban because of the credits. He appeared nowhere else in the film except as the mystery villain and when that mystery was revealed, and he whirled around in the high-backed chair, millions of Americans puzzled over what the big surprise was supposed to be.

As it happens, there were several million. Ratings were high (which meant the public liked the idea of a Wonder Woman show) but the pilot tested badly (which meant they didn't like the one ABC had come up with). It took all manner of surveys and demographic charts to convince ABC bigwigs that the show was a fiasco, and so they finally ordered up another, revised pilot. And they wondered why they were third.

The Captain Marvel TV show (called *Shazam* to avoid legal action by the Marvel Comics Group) debuted in the fall of 1974, a Saturday morning offering from Filmation. Filmation is otherwise known as a producer of cartoon shows (Superman, Batman, Aquaman and *Star Trek*, among others) and one would think the Billy Batson of the comics would adapt superbly to animation. But Saturday morning animation is only a bastard relative of real animation, and both are slowly becoming extinct. That in mind, Filmation decided to do *Shazam* as a live-action series.

That they decided to do it at all was prompted, oddly enough, by an article in a paper called *The Monster Times*. I did a piece previewing the upcoming Filmation *Star Trek* series and, when the issue came out, I drove over to the studio and plopped a copy on Lou Scheimer's desk. Scheimer is one of Filmation's two head men, and he had supplied me with material for the *Star Trek* piece. As he paged through *The Monster Times* he happened upon an article by Joe Brancatelli on the recent New York Comic Convention. The piece contained a photo of Captain Marvel artist C. C. Beck. Scheimer remarked that he had been a follower of the old comic book, recently revived by National Periodicals, and he asked me about its current status. A few months later, a friend at National informed me that

Cathy Lee Crosby as Wonder Woman.

Jackson Bostwick as Captain Marvel.

Les Tremayne (Mentor) and Michael Gray (Billy Batson) with the 1975-76 season's Captain Marvel, John Davey.

George Reeves as Clark Kent and Superman.

With James Craven and the first TV Lois Lane, Phyllis Coates.

Filmation wanted to do a Captain Marvel TV show.

The irony is this: When National first acquired the rights to Captain Marvel in 1972, they went to great lengths to stop Brancatelli from breaking the news in *The Monster Times* before they could officially announce it. All's well that ends that way, however. The TV tie-in brought considerable revenue to National, even though any follower of the show who picked up the comic would be baffled by the wide discrepancy.

And the discrepancy was wide. The TV show eliminated the title character (the wizard Shazam) replacing him with a wise old man, Mr. Mentor. Mentor and young Billy Batson drove around in a van, looking for dire emergencies so young Billy could utter the mystic word that transformed him into a whole different actor. Billy was played by Michael Gray who, in the tradition of live-action Saturday shows, was in the huggable Donny Osmond motif. The networks demand that kind of star so as to get him featured in the teen fan magazines. Captain Marvel was played by Jackson Bostwick and Mentor by Les Tremayne. The resultant show was harmless, but any recognition of the comic book Captain Marvel was in name only.

The two recent TV versions brought money to the comic book companies, though, as always, not to the creators of the comics. And, thankfully, they brought no new outpouring of "camp" culture. On the other side, they brought no recognition of the comic book as a breeding place for fiction of value. Of all crossovers into other media, the only one truly successful with any consistency has been Superman. Clark Kent's alter-ego has appeared in serials, a series of technically-superb theatrical cartoons, a Broadway stage production, a TV version of that play, a made-for-TV cartoon series or two and the classic, invulnerable live-action series starring George Reeves as the man himself.

Since its debut in 1952 the Reeves series has had more exposure than any other show, with the possible exception of *I Love Lucy*. And, even then, George Reeves and his Superman suit turned up in one episode of Lucille Ball's perennial classic. The Superman show had 104 episodes, 52 of them in color. They have been run and rerun and rerun. At one time, a station in Los Angeles ran 12 a week — one each afternoon, Monday through Saturday, and a three-hour marathon on Sunday morning. George Reeves shared little of this seeming bonanza. Hollywood legend has it that he was so typecast as Superman that he could procure no further work. He died in 1959, an apparent suicide.

The show had a rather meager budget—there have been more lavishly produced test patterns. And most test patterns display better acting. But, at the very least, it had Superman. As one of Superman's former writers was quoted, "He's indestructible. . .not even bad scripts can hurt him." Or a bad TV show, for that matter, and the George Reeves program was a *very* bad TV show. Once you resigned yourself to that fact, it was all the more fun. It was totally engrossing and, at times, capable of achieving some semblance of suspense. You were never disappointed, except when the local station hacked out part of the show to accomodate extra Bosco blurbs or, more likely, lost a segment from their time-worn prints.

Avid followers of the program usually share one common observation — the frequent technical fubars the show demonstrated as few shows ever did. There was the way George Reeves had of turning into a stunt man in the midst of action scenes. In fact, some aficionados swear they could recognize Reeves' double in a police line-up, should that situation ever arise. Then there were the many cameo appearances of the boom-mike in Perry White's office; in some episodes the microphone got more footage than Jimmy Olsen. The most memorable lapses were those times when Reeves would soar majestically across the skyways, regal music at a stirring pitch, with the "S" backwards on his chest, thanks to persons unknown at Special Effects.

As for the Superman Broadway show, it is worth mentioning in passing. You have to mention it quickly because it passed quickly. The official title was *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman*, produced by Harold Prince whose track record has included *Damn Yankees, Pajama Game, West Side Story, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum,*

Two scenes from the 1951 feature length TV pilot, *Superman and the Mole Men.*

TV's second Lois, Noel Neill.

Cabaret and *Fiddler on the Roof*. A man with that many hits is entitled to an occasional flop, and *Superman* was Prince's for 1966. It opened on March 9 and closed 128 performances later. That's really no small number of performances, but it was small enough for the show's backer (singular) to drop four hundred thousand dollars. In 1975 a two-hour adaptation turned up on ABC's late-night specials program, opposite Johnny Carson, where it met with critical pans and few wide-awake viewers.

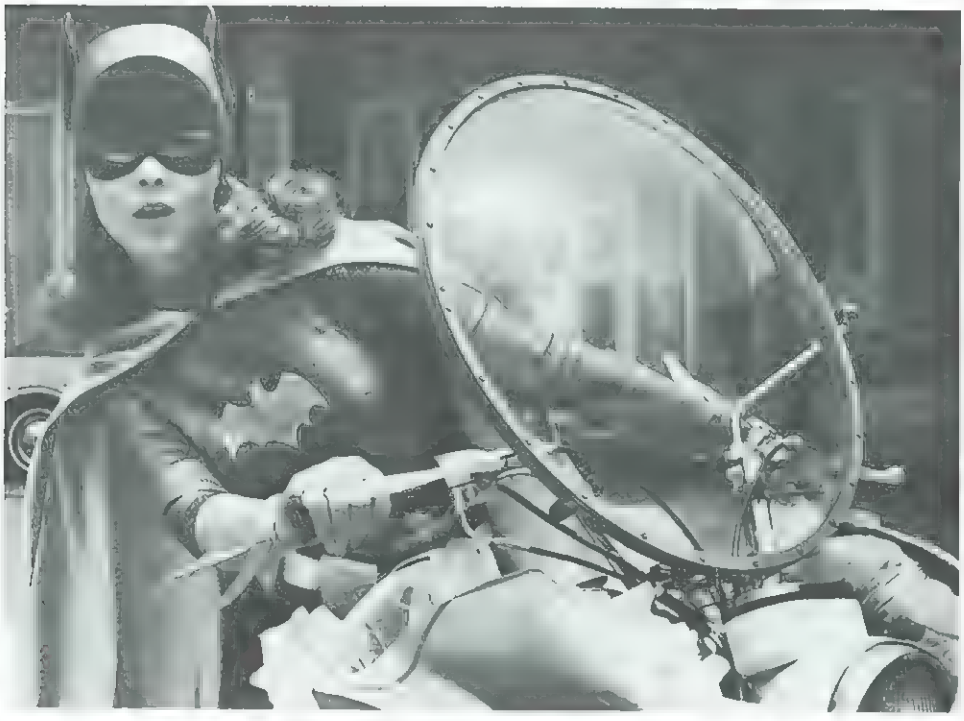
This musical-comedy foray stands as Superman's only real extra-curricular failure. Since the show treated him as a self-satire, it would be nice to be able to draw the conclusion that therein lies the reason for its failure. All of Superman's other appearances treated the character with at least some measure of respect.

It is in that vein that most purists' complaints are lodged against the Batman TV show. Super-heroes have been a comic book mainstay since their debut. And it has always been mandatory that they be treated with respect. There have been funny super-heroes to be sure, the most notable being Plastic Man and the original Captain Marvel. But the super-hero story must always be an episode in the classic confrontation of good versus evil. The hero is a strong-of-character champion and there should be few, preferably no sympathies with the villain. This concept escapes many people, including an embarrassing number who write super-hero comics.

Some writers have taken to weakening their heroes' convictions and fortitude. The "new-wave" super-hero — almost a total flop tolerated only by certain factions who think there is great realism and relevance in the depiction of neurosis—whimpers a lot, questions his values, questions if fighting for justice is much of a hobby, and generally subverts the whole point of the story. These are not anti-heroes, they are non-heroes and, therefore, the direct antithesis of super-heroes. Everything in comic books must be larger than life; the physical restrictions of the medium dictate that. Muscles are exaggerated, fight scenes flail in all directions, pretty girls are incredibly pretty as drawn, and ordinary heroes will not suffice. They must be *super*-heroes, better than anything within the context of reality. This is not necessarily so people can identify with them (although it does happen), but rather so they can generate some excitement off the printed page.

Burgess Meredith as the Penguin.

Cesar Romero as the Joker.



Yvonne Craig as Batgirl, astride her Batgirlcycle.

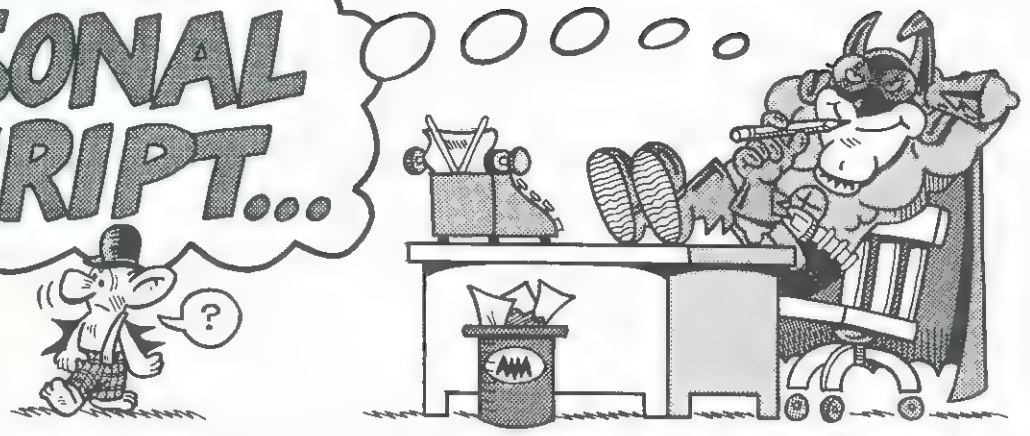
The writers who have failed at super-hero writing (and many are still on such assignments) are generally the ones who have forsaken the pure-hero concept; they either treated "pure good" as a mental deviation or as something to be mocked. They constantly weaken their heroes. Most *Superman* covers show the hero dead, prone or pleading for mercy from the villain.

I once asked a writer, guilty of all of the above, why he was always drumming up such compassion for the villain (he's not rotten, just misunderstood) that the reader couldn't possibly care who triumphed or which way the story's conflict was resolved. Why, I asked, was he constantly weakening the super-heroes and having them question their values? Why didn't he just do good-versus-evil and expend his creative juices on the sadly-neglected craft of plotting? I thought, but did not ask, why don't you come up with a new story line instead of some new way for your hero to whimper? His answer, not altogether surprising, was that it wasn't realistic to have a hero be a hero; "realism" demanded that his character, who could tear down brick walls and fly through space, have doubts about his goals in life.

That was much the way the Batman TV show went. The producers of the series took great pleasure in deriding the hero concept and, though the owners of the Batman character chose to ignore it, in ridiculing the whole comic book world. Producer Dozier once told of his first meeting about the show with ABC President Leonard Goldenson, of how Dozier had read aloud the Batman origin right out of a comic book. Dozier had narrated in the mock, quivering voice he later used as the show's announcer, and sent all present falling to the executive carpet in helpless laughter. That session cinched the attitude they were going to use on the program, and it was Batman's first Nielsen rating (the highest ever for a mid-season replacement) that convinced them they were right. No one ever suggested that Batman's astronomical first-night numbers might have denoted exactly the opposite. The show did not build up a following; it had a following before it even started. None of those millions who tuned in that debut night were expecting a laughingstock costumed crusader. They were merely expecting a Batman TV show. And they almost got one. □

A PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT...

BY MARK EVANIER



In 1966, being a Batman fan was an exalted position of status—especially if you were in junior high school, as I was. Around Emerson Junior High, I was a rather unique individual — the school's resident comic book addict and the only person on campus who knew who Ralph Waldo Emerson was. The principal thought he made radios. I was also the only person around who knew that Emerson Junior High had been erected on the site of the old Harold Lloyd movie studio, but there was no prestige in that.

Through no fault of mine, Batcraze gripped Emerson. When all the Batman toys and games and such were flooding the local Newberry's, one student came up with a most imaginative and enterprising variation, if unlicensed and unauthorized. He had a lucrative trade going in the boys locker room, peddling a ceaseless supply of contraceptive devices. With a ballpoint pen he scrawled a bat insignia on their wrappers and proclaimed he was selling Bat-condoms. The student whose locker was over mine purchased one every day, and I never learned whether he was an unmitigated Batmaniac or was just in the middle of a sensational lucky streak.

Along a not-altogether-dissimilar line, there was an overly-endowed female student whose ample chest and thrusting posture were constant topics of conversation, providing one displayed the proper amounts of awe and respect. She was almost a national landmark. When the rage was all the rage, she took to wearing a Batman t-shirt, and there wasn't a soul at Emerson who hadn't heard remarks about her Dynamic Duo.

This girl had attained her reputation way back in elementary school when she had begun bursting the stays on her training bra—this, at a time when every other girl in sight, including most teachers, was as flat as a bottle of lukewarm Moxie. All of the boys had been anxiously awaiting the arrival of tits; we all knew it was only a matter of time. So, when our buxom sixth-grader suddenly had the market cornered, she set up her own prosperous business during lunch hours. For a nickel she would sneak down to a certain corner of the schoolyard and strip to the waist for ogling and touching. Since a nickel was the same amount that most parents gave their offspring for milk each day, many males were confronted with a choice between good, strong bones and sex education that the Board of Education had not seen fit to include in the curriculum. If there's ever a reunion of the Westwood Elementary Class of '63, a lot of men are going to show up with rickets.

About the time that Batman was gamboling on the tube, I was invited to a rather dismal party. It was so dismal, we were all hustled out of the house for a big Scavenger Hunt — one of those whoopee ideas that can bring an otherwise dull party to the level of utter vapidity.

We were divided into three teams, about six per, with my date on another team captained by a pimply neanderthal who had spent the evening trying to look up her skirt. Not that there was anything better to do.

Each team took a shopping bag (from *Orbach's*, making for a rather gauche scavenger hunt) and a list of two dozen items we were to pester the neighbors for. With our identical lists, each group headed off in a different direction to gather its items or, at least, to lower property values considerably. As we huddled under a street light to see what work was cut out for us, one person shouted, "Hey, Evanier! Get a load of item number ten!" It was—and I quote—"One *Batman* comic book," close quote.

Whether that item was put on the list in deference to my presence at the party, I don't know. But I do know it was the only item my team didn't locate. We came back with the purple toilet paper and the golf tee and the copy of *National Geographic* and last year's calendar and the other wretched excess. We covered three whole blocks in a fashionable Brentwood neighborhood, holding out our Orbach's bags and posing our eternal question ("Do you have any purple toilet paper?") and could find no trace of a Batman comic book.

However, another team did have one at check-in time. And the third team brought back something they hoped would qualify. A few blocks away they had knocked unsuspectingly on the door of a writer for the Batman TV series. As if you couldn't guess, he didn't own a Batman comic book. But he did give them a copy of one of his scripts on condition that they return it, following the final tally. After much deliberation and a hasty consultation of the Marquis of Queensbury's Scavenger Hunt rules, it was decided that it would qualify, and two of Team Three's scavengers set out to return it.

Unfortunately, it was dark and they were unable to recall just which house it had come from. They returned, after half an hour, to report that they had knocked on dozens of doors and looked in the Yellow Pages under "hacks" but had been unable to locate the TV scribe again.

The script gathered dust at the hostess's house for a few weeks. Finally, she decided to give it to me. I had no use for it, so I traded it in at a Hollywood book store that trafficked in such material. After closing the deal the proprietor said, "You know, I've been looking for a copy of this particular script. The guy who wrote it was in here asking for one—he gave away his only copy to some stupid kids."

TV SUPERHEROES Part 2

LYNDA CARTER

WONDER WOMAN

AND

BOBBIE JOE

Even as the *Fanfare* typographer was laying down copy for the preceding article, a miracle of sorts was in the works.

It started, in a way, back in 1967. That's when producer William Dozier put Stanley Ralph Ross, one of his better Batman writers, to work on a half-hour Wonder Woman comedy. The resultant pilot script never got before a camera, but years later, when Warners had their own Wonder Woman project in mind, they called Ross in

He told them how he wanted to do it: No camp, no ridiculing the character as Batman had. What Ross proposed was, as he puts it, "somewhere between adventure, comedy and tongue-in-cheek" and set firmly and irrevocably in the midst of World War II. That wasn't what Warners had in mind, it seems. Ross stashed his notes in a filing cabinet and returned to a heavy load of other TV commitments. Warners went their own route and produced Wonder Woman *their* way, resulting in high ratings and a veritable *Meleagris gallopava* (i.e., Turkey) of a show. So they went back to Square One — back to the drawing board, as it were — back to Stanley Ralph Ross.

Ross brought forth his notes and pointed out that what people wanted was the real Wonder Woman, not some cheapjack facsimile. Ross took a copy of the Gloria Steinem/*Ms.* magazine Wonder Woman book (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) and used the original Wonder Woman origin story by Charles Moulton as a basis. He added much new material, mainly

emphasizing the Nazi menace, and came up with a gem of a first draft, two hours in length. Along the way, it would wind up as a 90-minute script with not so much humor (a scene where a saleslady tries to explain to the naive WW what a brassiere is was among the casualties) but which was furlongs ahead of its predecessor. Particularly good was the delicate handling of the Wonder Woman-Steve Trevor romance Back on the Batman show, Ross, in addition to most of the King Tut and other "new villains" episodes, had handled the Catwoman scripts, carefully plotting out the subtle love interest between her and the title character. (He also designed much of Julie Newmar's skin-tight wardrobe.) The Batman-Catwoman romance, by the way, was to have culminated in one episode with a marriage aboard the Staten Island Ferry — but then Eartha Kitt inherited the role from Newmar and all romantic entanglements vanished. Television was not ready for Batman in a mixed marriage.

But television *was* ready for "The ORIGINAL Wonder Woman." The comely Lynda Carter, a former Miss USA, played the Amazon Princess, abetted by a supporting cast that included Cloris Leachman as Queen Hippolyte, Lyle Waggoner as Steve Trevor, plus Red Buttons, Kenneth Mars, Henry Gibson, Fannie Flagg and Stella Stevens. What finally showed up on ABC one Friday night was a superb rendition of the character — proof positive that a comic book *can* be transferred to the screen and maintain not only the mood of the source material but also the integrity of the character.

And ABC was ready. Buoyed by its bionic successes, the network was willing to go with the Amazon Princess, though not as a series. Rather, programming tsar Fred Silverman ordered up a batch of Wonder Woman specials which he could situate at will in and about his schedule, the better to neutralize competing networks. Long the "third network" (and, at times, just barely that), ABC was already moving into the lead, thanks to bionics and Fonzie. Wonder Woman proved to be Silverman's queen in the chess game of network television Moved into one time slot, she clobbered a Bob Hope special; in another, a competing network movie. At this writing, the series remains a programming nomad — but it *is* a series and its star is fast becoming a star.

Lynda Carter was naught but a former beauty queen when she first walked onto the Burbank Studios/Warner Brothers lot. She had made one appearance on the short-lived *Nakia* tv series and another in an unsold pilot called *Shamus*. Other than that, what she had to her credit was the usual ex-Miss USA shtick: personal appearances, ceremonial promotions and a USO tour. And she was but one of countless gorgeous young ladies who journeyed to Burbank, seeking the lead role in the film of Irving Wallace's novel, *The Fan Club*. Producer Larry Gordon made much hubbub in the industry over his search for the actress who might play Sharon Fields, the movie sex symbol who is kidnapped and ravaged by some of her adoring public. Lynda Carter proved not to be that actress. Neither did the rest of the countless gorgeous young ladies. At the moment, the oft-postponed film looks like it will join the even more countless number of unproduced movies, though there are rumors that Barbi Benton is being considered anew. Whatever the disposition, Ms. Carter didn't get the role.

Not that Larry Gordon wasn't impressed with her, however. He liked her and, more importantly, he told Douglas Cramer about her. Cramer, you see, was producing this show called *Wonder Woman* and that's how it happened. Soon, she was pulling down six grand a week (twice co-star Lyle Waggoner's stipend), plus making countless TV guest appearances and, thus far, two movies. With Lynda's television success as Wonder Woman leading the way to a budding film career, steps were taken to avoid

the specter of typecasting (as had happened to George Reeves following his long-running tenure as TV's Superman) by contracting for her a wholly different kind of role in her first feature motion picture, *Bobbie Joe and the Outlaw*.

Hang in there now, because this is going to take us out and back via the North Forty. . .

Bobbie Joe, spelled that way and released by American International in 1976, was yet another entry in the recent cycle of movies dealing with the now familiar Bonnie and Clyde theme and its mutations. The basic situation is the same in every film. A footloose girl in her teens or twenties hitches up with an itinerant guy of about the same age, and together, discovering a sense of adventurous team strength they lacked singly, they embark on an unabated crime spree while letting the devil take the hindmost. In the main variation the protagonists are cast as ill-fated, restless innocents brought together by chance. Having nothing better to do they hit the road, traveling rural byways leading to small town stops and making the disastrous mistake of crossing county lines. By a luckless turn of events that puts them on the wrong side of the law, they soon find themselves pursued by an ever-tightening police dragnet, depicted as manned through and through by tank-town rednecks. With itchy trigger fingers at the ready, they catch the fugitives and wipe them out — provided the couple hasn't beaten them to it by destroying themselves in a car crash.

The spectacular success of *Bonnie and Clyde*, starring Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, started the trend in 1967. It resulted in a succession of movies that worked assorted improvisations on the idea of a youthful pair of criminals or social outcasts against the hopeless odds of a system presented to us as obliged only to do them in: *Thieves Like Us* (Keith Carradine and Shelley Duvall), *Buster and Billie* (Jan Michael Vincent and Joan Goodfellow), *Badlands* (Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek), *Return to Macon County* (Don Johnson and Robin Mattson), *Dirty Mary and Crazy Larry* (Susan George and Peter Fonda), *The Sugarland Express* (Michael Sacks and Goldie Hawn), *Aloha, Bobby and Rose* (Paul Le Mat and Dianne Hull), among others. A new one seemed to come out every few months like clockwork.

The cycle, threatening to saturate theaters during 1970-75, had its own succession of forerunners produced at less predictable intervals. In 1958 Dorothy Provine and Jack Hogan were the principals in *The Bonnie Parker Story*, a low budget exploitation drama directed by former mainstay of 1940s Republic serials, William Witney. The Bonnie and Clyde theme appeared still earlier in *Gun Crazy* (John Dahl and Peggy Cummins, 1950) and *They Live By Night* (Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell, 1948), both appropriately framed in the grim, fatalistic postwar style now referred to as *film noir*.

Noir elements in *Bonnie and Clyde* and most of its offspring are minimal at best. Noir elements in writer-producer-director Mark Lester's *Bobbie Joe and the Outlaw* are non-existent. His previous effort was *Truckstop Women*, a 1974 American International release

featuring Claudia Jennings, the 1969 Playboy Playmate of the Year. *Truckstop* wasn't quite the contemporary exploitation gem it was cracked up to be, with an energetic wimlib-inspired storyline fizzling out in a weakly staged ending, but it did show considerable promise if Lester continued to inject novel ideas into the old, honorable formulas. *Bobbie Joe* had a bigger budget and, with Lynda Carter and Marjoe Gortner, marginally bigger name actors. Expectations for a standout movie, however, went unfulfilled.

Bobbie Joe and the Outlaw was not precisely an auspicious screen debut for Lynda. There is no great shortage of guy-and-girl-on-the-lam-from-the-law films and this one had all the imitative accounterments: Redneck Southern sheriffs, car demolition, blood (though not a lot), sex (ditto), country-style music (including one song performed by Lynda) and extremely dumb plot points. Tricked into being an accomplice to murder, the Outlaw (Gortner) must get out of town with his woman, Bobbie Joe (Carter). At this point, the minions of the law have absolutely no leads on the murder but they do have a roadblock. For no visible reason, other than that it had been an entire reel since the last car chase, Gortner runs their roadblock, thereby allowing the Keystone rejects to get his license number and description. Forced by an unreasoning law to become fugitives, the title characters decide to do it up right. Now, pay attention to this because it's incredible. They want to get reputations as hot-shot bank robbers so they decide to pull a daring, daylight Savings and Loan heist. But they have only a few machine guns in their arsenal so, in order to get the proper weaponry, they stage a commando-style assault on a gun shop. They kill most of the gun shop employees and make off with enough pistols to pull their daring, daylight bank job and become famous. Machine guns and murder so they can get pistols to rob a bank and be famous. Figure that one out. Also, figure out why the film got decent reviews and high box office grosses. Could it have had anything to do with the fact that its release in most cities was timed to coincide with a Wonder Woman TV special? Maybe it had something to do with those ads that had Lynda Carter's name in REAL BIG TYPE. Or maybe a lot of folks just like dumb movies Or all of the above

Her second film is not yet released: Francis Ford Coppola's Vietnam war epic *Apocalypse Now,* filmed partly on location in the Phillipines in the midst of nearly impossible weather conditions when typhoon Olga hit the island of Luzon. The film company was, to quote from a tune by the Cadets, stranded in the jungle — helplessly watching their sets being reduced to shambles by the relentless downpour. Telephone communications were cut off, all bridges were down. One group of actors and technicians were sequestered across the river, while Coppola and additional cast members, including Lynda, were with another group at Olongapo. For three days each gathering was totally isolated from the others ten miles away, not knowing if their colleagues were alive. Fortunately there were no casualties. During her two and a half weeks in the Phillipines, Lynda spent most of the time slogging about in the mud clad in Army fatigues and combat boots, hoping with everyone else to get production underway again. Eventually *Apocalypse Now* resumed filming and she was able to complete her scenes, after which she returned stateside to start work on the first of eleven 60-minute Wonder Woman specials.

Lynda Carter in *Bobbie Joe and the Outlaw*

Lynda's fast-accumulating credits as a dramatic actress often overshadow her other talents in the performing arts. She's been interested in singing for as long as she can remember. Raised in Phoenix, Arizona, at age 15 she started singing several nights a week at the local college crowd's favorite after-hours hangout, the Pizza Inn. Enrolled at Arcadia Titans High School in Scottsdale, a Phoenix suburb, she was an active participant in choral groups and musical theatre productions. She played the role of Rosie in a student production of *Bye Bye Birdie.* After graduating from Arcadia she went on the road to perform professionally, debuting at the Sahara in Las Vegas. She traveled the club circuit for three years until she decided the rigors of that life weren't for her, so she gave up touring and returned home. She cut a demo for a recording company. While waiting in Phoenix for the outcome of her demo session, she entered a beauty contest. In only one month's time she was Miss Phoenix, Miss Arizona, Miss USA, and was then on her way to London for the Miss World Pageant. When this whirlwind of activity was over, she headed for Hollywood to study acting. The Miss USA title proved to be more of a hindrance than a help at first, but soon the career she looked for started to take shape. She still studies acting, now with coach Laura Zucker, fitting classes into an increasingly busy calendar of occupational pursuits.

A steady stream of guest appearances (Hollywood Squares, Dinah!, the Carson Show) are integrated into Lynda's shooting schedule on *Wonder Woman.* Though the show is filmed relatively fast at Burbank Studios, it still takes a good deal of time — and exhausting time, at that. She does most of her own stunts and, when the camera is off, puts herself through a rigorous exercise program. Though others may have just cause to admire her figure, Lynda Carter is ever-so-critical. The first time she saw herself on-screen in the Wonder Woman skimpies, she was horrified and immediately went on a crash jogging program to plane down her hips. A semi-vegetarian, she is also an advocate of Pyramid Power, reincarnation, parapsychology, psychic energy and various and sundry higher wisdoms. Her press agent hand-out informs us that, in past existences, she was an Aztec Indian, an English commoner, a Pioneer and the wife of a Pharoah. Sure sounds like a super-heroine to me.

So there you have her: Lynda Carter, latest in the line of superhero personators, starring in one of the better comic-book-to-film transferences. Hopefully, Wonder Woman is but the first in a new wave of many.

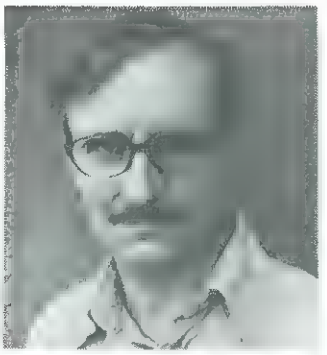
— Mark Evanier and Bill Spicer

I LIKE BEIN' IN THIS HERE MAGAZINE A LOT BETTER'N BEIN' IN A NEWSPAPER.
BECAUSE OF THE ADDED PRESTIGE ?
NO, BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T TRAIN THEIR DOGS ON MAGAZINES!
RUSSELL MYERS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO BROOM HILDA

by MARK EVANIER

Russell Myers



In examining the religious and theological significance of Russell Myers' nationally-syndicated newspaper strip, the Biblical scholar can come to but one rather blatant and wholly-inescapable conclusion.

There isn't any.

And the fact that none is implied, that Myers was personally horrified at the title of this piece, puts his horny little witch leagues ahead of certain sectarians in overall relevance. You know the type: the flashy, grandiose lay preachers who are less

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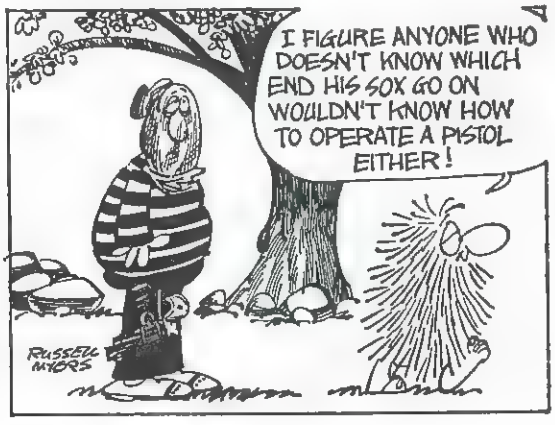
interested in extolling a belief in Him than in selling themselves as His hand-selected emissaries. One of them appears intermittently on an all-religious UHF channel in Los Angeles to complain that newspapers don't print nearly enough spiritual material. To hear him tell it, the *Times* should rightly consist of cover-to-cover Bible excerpts, plus his column and maybe the football scores, if and when Notre Dame is playing. "And the first thing to go," he says, "should be the comic page. What drivel what a waste of valuable newsprint!" It is somewhat frightening to think that a freelance evangelist is roaming the country with a one-fascist crusade to eradicate the funny papers.

None of this, however, should surprise the comic strip scholars who, unlike their Biblical numbers, have found much of significance in *Broom-Hilda*. They know only too well that the comic page has increasingly come under fire from many quarters. To begin with, there are accountants looking for drastic means to save a smidgen of newsprint. So that there will be an ample supply on which to imprint advertising, paper is saved, according to their suggestions, by eliminating strips and/or printing them smaller. And then there are the news editors who, in their ever-desperate quest to compete with television, somehow think this can be accomplished by jettisoning whatever TV doesn't have. Thus, you have editors who think that, until such time as Walter Cronkite starts showing cartoons, they don't want "funnies" in their papers. Ridiculous. News on TV is free and faster —and the only reason to buy a newspaper at all these days is to get those things that TV can't offer: in-depth reporting and special features—like comic strips.

But the surest indication of the value of strips lies with their followings, which is formidable. And, among the newer strips, *Broom-Hilda* stands with *Hagar* and *Doonesbury*. All three have achieved an amazing popularity in a relatively short period of time; in *Broom-Hilda's* case, since April 20 of 1970.

That's when it began in the newspapers. For Russell Myers, it began some time earlier. A long-time cartoon buff (George Herriman, Roy Crane and Carl Barks are just three of his many heroes), Myers had been drawing contemporary-style greeting cards for the Hallmark folks for ten years. A good job, but not what he wanted. What

he wanted was his own strip and so, in his spare time, he had knocked out samples for half a dozen different strips, some of which came within millimeters of selling. His best was probably an Old West, cowboys-and-Indians thing, drawn up when he



was naively unaware of a new strip called *Tumbleweeds*. So much for *that* idea.

One day, after his last submission had gone down for the third time, and his new one had yet to be thought of, Myers got a call from Charlie Barsotti. Apart from being a Kansas City neighbor and the Insane

Person behind the *Sally Bananas* strip, Barsotti was also well-aware of Myers' aspirations. While at a New York cocktail party, Charles had encountered Elliot Caplin, a writer in search of a cartoonist.

Caplin, who is invariably sub-titled as "Al Capp's brother," is also one of the more prolific—and anonymous -writers of newspaper comic strips. Some time earlier, he had come up with a name for a comic strip about a witch and, working with a cartoonist friend, attempted unsuccessfully to flesh the name, Broom-Hilda, out into an actual feature. He mentioned the problem to Barsotti who, in turn, relayed it to Myers. All Caplin had was a title and no concrete idea as to what kind of character it might fit.

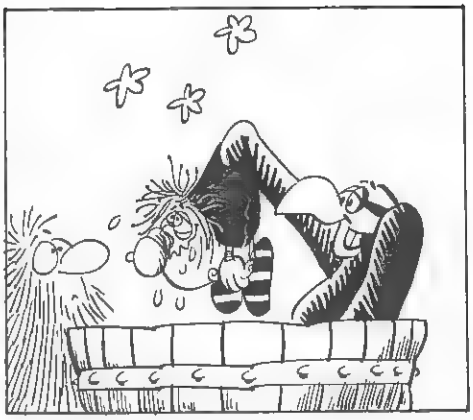
Caplin asked to see samples of Myers' work in the greeting card business. Instead, Russ sent six completed newspaper strips. He'd taken the name and built a strip around it, in hopes of demonstrating his ability to do the feature on his own. It worked. Caplin liked the samples and was satisfied to function as the strip's manager. Myers has written and drawn all of the

Broom-Hilda strips to date, taking no assistance from anyone he hasn't married.

What probably impressed Caplin the most was Myers' superb gift for weird characters. Broom-Hilda herself appeals to

our vices the way Charlie Brown preys on our failures. She is short, green, unbelievably old and possessed of all the daintiness of Tugboat Annie ramming a garbage scow. She would love dearly to find a boy friend (Howard Cosell is her dream-date) but is willing to settle for a can of beer and the cheapest cigars around (a buck gets you fifty of them plus change). She is indefatigable. She and the others dwell in and around the Haunted Forest, whereabouts unknown, a place where the scenery changes from panel-to-panel but always in the bizarre Myers motif.

Irwin the Troll is her most frequent companion and serves as a walking explanation as to why trolls are so few in number these days. They were too dumb to survive. Irwin has the collective intelligence of three Pachinko machines, none of them



operative. But he also has an innate goodness; he not only communes with nature, he carries out long conversations and, what

is even more surprising is that nature answers him back. Only Irwin could chant "rain, rain, go away. . ." and have the rain comply.

The third member of the first-string team is Gaylord, a snooty, well-educated buzzard who preys on cabbage. Once, he

tried for a rabbit but his quarry threatened to turn his family loose in reprisal. "One good thing about cabbage," Gaylord explained, is that "its relatives don't come gunning for you!"

Those are the Big Three and Myers is apt to go for weeks without showing anyone else. Or, as the mood suits him, he's liable to inject a supporting character like Herschel the pig or Marshall the sissy vampire. And then there's Grelber who defies

description but is more than eager to offer descriptions (always unflattering) of those luckless souls who pass his log. Each and every character probably mirrors some minute facet in Myers' psyche–some less minute than others, perhaps.

Russell Myers himself is a refugee Kansan, now settled in California with his wife (and severest critic-adviser) Marina, their son, Stewart, and a collection of antique automobiles. He has been told by more than a few people that he resembles Dennis Weaver in both looks and speech. One of the fastest artists in the field, Myers zips through a strip, never skimping on detail, making numerous mistakes that must be corrected after. This spontaneity of working creates his distinctive, colorful style; even on those inevitable days when the gag at hand is below standard, the pictures just about make up for it. Whereas many artists hire assistants to help with gags or drawing or lettering or everything, and *still* gripe about their workload, Russell Myers shuns outside help. His wife critiques his ideas, helping him single out the usable ones from the surplus he writes. Then he settles down to the board and draws as if the pen were electrified and, the sooner he gets rid of it, the better.

What results is one of the finer comic strips being offered to newspapers these days. Nearly everyone can find some nugget of identification with one of the characters who, among themselves, personify almost every conceivable human frailty and several *in*human ones. The Haunted Forest functions as a microcosm of our crazy world where the normal is non-existent. And in playing out the idiosyncrasies, the cast demonstrates our strengths, as well–for as stupid as Irwin is, so is he innocent; a veritable *tabula rasa* loose in the land. And what results is something akin to the words of the Old Testament, "I said of laughter, It is mad." *(Ecclesiastes, ii, 2)*

Come to think of it, maybe there *is* a Gospel According to Broom-Hilda. □

BROOM-HILDA

A few unpublished strips that for reasons of taste or syndicate cowardice never saw the light of a comics page. Fortunately for you all, *Fanfare* has no such taste.

I'M GOING TO VISIT MY COUSIN IN CALIFORNIA!
I SEE. HIS HOME IS NEAR THE OCEAN, EH?
NOT AT THE MOMENT, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW...
RUSSELL MYERS

I INVITED HERSCHEL TO LUNCH.
HERSCHEL? A PIG?
OF COURSE... HE'S A FINE GUEST... HE HAS PERFECT MANNERS, IS A DELIGHTFUL CONVERSATIONALIST...
RUSSELL MYERS
AND HE EVEN OFFERED TO BRING THE FOOD!

I JUST HAD A COUPLE BEERS AT THE "21" CLUB. WHATTA AWFUL PLACE!
IS IT CALLED THE "21" CLUB BECAUSE THAT'S THE LEGAL DRINKING AGE?
NO
© 1976 by The Chicago Tribune All Rights Reserved
BECAUSE OF HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AHEAD OF YOU IN THE LINE TO THE RESTROOM.
RUSSELL MYERS

ROCK DRUGS AND THE BEATLES

BY DAVID A. NOEBEL

When rock 'n' roll hit Britain in 1954, the Beatles' biography admitted, "cinema seats started to be ripped up." And this has been basically and consistently the history of this form of music since the film **Blackboard Jungle** moved onto center stage in 1955. This or that rock group "wound up the crowd so tight they snapped" has been the lament of scores of law enforcement officers who have been called in to quell the miniature and some not-so-miniature riots that have occurred across America. And now a survey reveals that 87% of the teenagers listen to rock 'n' roll, with 83% purchasing discs within a year's time; and according to one source, over one billion dollars was spent for this form of music in 1969 and 1970.

Although some authorities argue that rock 'n' roll is a good way to wear off energy, the truth of the matter is just the reverse. Even if true, the cure would be worse than the disease. Rock 'n' roll winds up the individual. It doesn't wind him down! Disc jockeys admit to playing a few soft numbers after "hard" rock to "cool down" the kids. At the Baltimore decency rally where hard rock was constantly beat at the young people, the rally ended in disaster.

Music professor Frank Garlock commented that, almost daily, the newspapers report on neurotic behavior which has accompanied or followed a rock 'n' roll session. Social disrupters have used rock 'n' roll and its performers to promote revolution. "Rock 'n' roll," he says, "often acts as an accompaniment for teenage wars, riots and sex orgies." Professor Garlock, in analyzing music in general and rock 'n' roll in particular, states that "the manner in which music affects the listener varies according to the proportion of tension and relaxation in the music. Good music has a balance of these two elements. The more exciting the piece of music, the more elements of tension will be found in it, but no good music ever uses one to the exclusion of the other." He lists certain elements of rock such as constant repition of pitches, almost no melody, slightly out of true pitch, overuse of high pitches, unnatural accents, breaking up of rhythms, etc. It is, therefore, "no wonder," he says, "that the kids scream, faint, gyrate and go into ecstatic convulsions."

Composer Andre Previn notes that there is an easy way to upgrade pop music to what it was at one time. Says Previn, "The disc jockeys could play good music. I think anything heard a lot becomes popular. If they played excerpts from Wozzeck a lot, the kids would whistle it on the way to the ball game. I think it is appalling—the closer the songs are to the idiot level, the more they play them, and the better they sell."

David Gornston, nationally known music publisher, educator, author and lecturer, feels that every professional musician should be alerted in every corner of the country so that he as an individual can vocally and violently object to every manifestation of poor musical taste. Gornston insists that as soon as a professional musician hears a radio or TV program featuring musical "garbage," he should object directly to the station, sending his protest directly to the advertiser sponsoring the program, and urging his friends and neighbors to express their distaste for the cheap and the shoddy. He says all people with discriminating musical tastes should be urged to complain in restaurants, schools, college cafeterias, etc., whenever the juke box is stocked with "sound monstrosities" which purport to be music. Gornston then makes an interesting observation: "Discriminating musicians must realize that a handful of characters help to perpetuate poor taste in music by controlling the commercially contrived system of record selection known as 'the Top 40.' Those things which are referred to as being 'in the market' are really only the records, selected by the Top 40 D.J.'s and the radio stations, which are produced in quantity by record performers who want to 'get into the Top 40 market.' Thus, a vicious cycle is established so that not only are 'good music singles' not released, but are actually automatically eliminated if they are produced and distributed. A concerted effort to knock out this commercial record cancer might be accomplished by having the union, in conjunction with the professional dancing instructors and serious school educators, release and espouse a 'good music Top 100' music list of their own. This list would represent a broad cross section of artists and big bands which reveal musical competence and taste."

One unusual standard of musical competence and taste might well turn out to be the family plant. In a series of experiments in which potted plants were exposed to everything from Bach and Beethoven to hard rock groups the results were predictable. "What acid rock did to the petunias shouldn't happen to our teenagers" was the conclusion!

The article entitled "Music that Kills Plants" (T. Olga Curtis, **Denver Post**, June 21, 1970) begins, "For nearly two years now, Mrs. Dorothy Retallack of Denver has been killing off assorted potted plants by making them listen to rock music."

In her series of experiments, Mrs. Retallack discovered that just three hours of acid rock a day shrivels young squash plants and flattens philodendron and crumbles corn in less than a month. Wonders Mrs. Retallack: If the sound of rock does that to plants, what is it doing to our human teenagers? "Could the discordant sounds we hear these days," states Mrs. Retallack, "be the reason humanity is growing neurotic?"

Of course, we have maintained this for some time, but never really thought about plants supplying us with nature's answer to atonal music. In one potent picture of two plants dying the cut line reads, "Two Cherokee bean plants, one dying from acid rock sound, the other tilting from atonal music." It might as well have read, "Two teenage beanies, one dying from acid rock sound, the other tilting from atonal music."

In contrast, another cut line under a healthy group of plants reads, "Bach organ music was soothing to these plants: they grew relatively straight and healthy in controlled environment."

Mrs. Retallack's professor of biology (Temple Buell College), Francis F. Broman, makes it clear that the undertaking was scientific. Says Broman, "I should point out that Dorothy worked under strict scientific controls from the first, and we did everything possible to insure accurate, unbiased results."

The experiment went something like this: several groups of assorted plants, usually five different plants to a group, would be placed in controlled-environment chambers (big closed cabinets on wheels in which light, temperature and air were regulated automatically). At one side of each cabinet, a loud-speaker was placed to introduce sound, usually from a tape recorder.

Mrs. Retallack once piped music from two Denver radio stations to her plants. One group was exposed to a Denver station KIMN (a rock

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"Rock, Drugs and the Beatles" is excerpted from Mr. Noebel's *The Marxist Minstrels (A Handbook on Communist Subversion of Music)*, ©1974 by American Christian Press, reprinted by permission.

station) and another group to KLIR (a semi-classical station). The results: "The petunias listening to KIMN refused to bloom. Those on KLIR developed six beautiful blooms. By the end of the second week, the KIMN petunias were leaning away from the radio and showing very erratic growth. The petunia blooms hearing KLIR were all leaning toward the sound. Within a month all plants exposed to rock music died."

Mrs. Retallack summarized, "If rock music has an adverse effect on plants, is the rock music listened to so long and so often by the younger generation partly responsible for their erratic, chaotic behavior?"

In a three-week experiment Mrs. Retallack played the recordings of Led Zeppelin and the Vanilla Fudge to a group of beans, squash, corn, morning glory and coleus. To another group with the same plants she played contemporary **avant-garde** music and to a third group she played nothing (as a control).

Result: At the end of the first 10 days, the plants exposed to rock were all leaning away from the speaker. At the end of three weeks the plants were dying. The squash had almost fallen over. The morning glory, instead of crawling up as is natural, had sagged and was stretched over four pots, in the direction away from the music. Corn stalks sagged in the middle. The beans were stunted and tilted far away from the speaker. All the plants showed browning leaves except the crimson coleus.

The beans listening to the contemporary music leaned 15 degrees from the speaker and had middle-sized roots.

The controlled group grew the highest and had long, bushy roots. But, and not too surprising, Mrs. Retallack found that plants listening to calm devotional music measured two inches higher than even those grown in silence. And besides, the plants instead of turning away from the speaker "leaned into it."

The hidden dangers of rock 'n' roll should be apparent to all who take a second look. There are emotional, psychological, spiritual, moral and, last but not least, national dangers. The idea of rock 'n' roll serving as a conditioner of violence and revolution cannot be hastily set aside. One has only to observe what rock has done to cause our young people to riot and participate in social rebellion, chaos and bedlam, to understand how significantly music fits into any revolutionary era. Jacques Barzun's work, **Darwin, Marx, Wagner,** should quickly dispel from our minds any slighting we might give to the importance of music when it comes to culturally preparing the way for ideas—including revolutionary ideas.

Mick Jagger and Keith Richard of the Rolling Stones

Wagner was a life-long socialist who boasted, "My task is this: to bring revolution wherever I go." Barzun's thesis is that it was no accident that during the Wagner era the ideas of Darwin and Marx swept Europe and England. Wagner set the cultural matrix for the speedy acceptance of such ideas. Similarly, it is now being argued that hard rock 'n' roll is setting the cultural matrix for the acceptance of drugs, promiscuous sex and revolution.

"A larger-than-life portrait of Karl Marx dominated the entrance of a classroom building; a red flag flew from its rooftop. Chains barred the doors of other buildings, and chanting mobs roamed across the campus." Thus begins the description of a revolutionary take-over of Columbia University on April 23, 1968, written by Professor Robert Hessen, a young instructor at the University's Graduate School of Business, and a doctoral candidate in the Department of History.

The revolutionary organization which instigated the seizure of the campus with less than 200 members out of a student body of some 17,800 was the radical, pro-Communist Students for a Democratic Society—euphemistically referred to as the "New Left." According to Professor Hessen, the intellectual heroes of the SDS were Karl Marx and Mao Tse-tung, its action hero was Che Guevara, and, its slogan scrawled across the embattled Columbia campus read, "Lenin won, Castro won, and we will win, too!"

The SDS clientele quite naturally feed on Marx's **Communist Manifesto,** Lenin's **State and Revolution** and most have consumed Mao's **Quotations** in their quest for the know-how in establishing a Communist society. But beyond this, they also devour their subversive, underground press and that form of rock 'n' roll which not only drowns them in noise but in drugs, promiscuous sex and revolution. And difficult as it may be for some to accept, the Beatles still are the New Left's favorite cultural heroes.

Jerry Rubin in his scenarios of the revolution entitled **Do It!** has a number of things to say about rock music. His book, published in 1970 by Simon and Schuster, is supposed to be a Molotov cocktail in the hands of our youth. Says Simon and Schuster, "Jerry Rubin has written **The Communist Manifesto** of our era. **Do It!** is a Declaration of War between the generations—calling on kids to leave their homes, burn down their schools and create a new society upon the ashes of the old." It was this same Rubin who called for the killing of parents as a protest against the establishment.

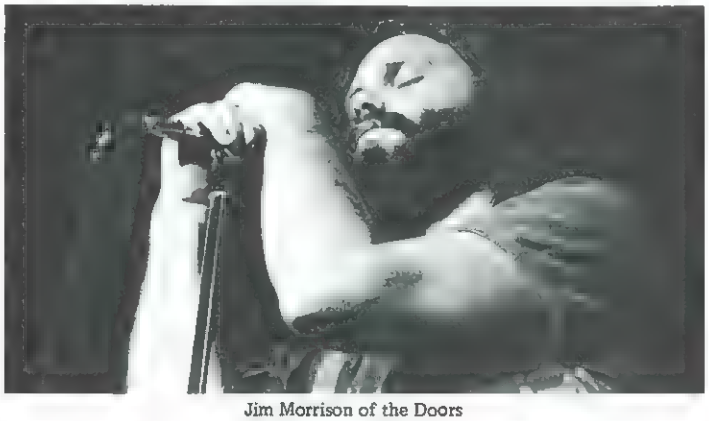
"Rock 'n' roll marked the beginning of the revolution," says Rubin. "Hard animal rock energy beat /surged hot through us, the driving rhythm arousing repressed passions." Rock music in turn, he says, caused the sex and drug revolution and these revolutions in turn were channeled into the Communist revolution. "We've combined youth, music, sex, drugs and rebellion with treason—and that's a combination hard to beat," says Rubin. And again, "sex, rock 'n' roll and dope" are "part of a Communist plot to take over America."

The campus radicals who hypocritically tote the so-called peace symbol while wearing on their lapels a picture of the cold-blooded killer and revolutionist, Che Guevara, and who demand public morality of bankers, generals and U.S. Presidents, while flouting all personal morality, are still singing vigorously the Beatles' **Back in the U.S.S.R.** The song was the number one hit in Russia in spite of the fact that the Communist government frowns on rock 'n' roll because of its decadent influence on the young. The Communists found that when they outlawed rock music in the early '60s, they reduced their juvenile delinquency by over 30% in three short years. But Radio Moscow could not resist playing a rendition which contained such "progressive" lyrics as the Beatles' hit number. In fact, Mary Hopkin, who recorded for the then-Beatles-owned Apple Records, gave half the plot away when she offhandedly commented, "Now everything connected with Russia is fashionable."

Of course, the U.S. radicals in particular also appreciate the Beatles for their subtle and not-so-subtle discs promoting drugs and sexual promiscuity. They know all too well that such ingredients precipitate fuller, riper revolutions.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones, in a 1969 **Tulsa Tribune** editorial entitled "The Issue Is Degeneracy," observed "Great civilizations and animal standards of behavior co-exist only for short periods." In the course of his discussion, the two examples cited to illustrate "animal standards" were both related to rock 'n' roll groups. They were the late Jim Morrison of the Doors, and his filthy antics in Miami in March, 1969, which are scarcely printable, and the Fugs. In the album **The Virgin Fugs,** which Jones correctly assesses "is on sale to your child practically anywhere," he finds it not only a purveyor of filth but bears an extravagant admiration for Moscow, Peking and Havana, and says the Fugs sing lustfully that "the Commies are going to take Brooklyn and they will take Nassau, too; the Commies all make good soldiers." Jones recommends the Fugs' miserably-played album to "any who still think that the problem, if ignored, will go away."

The Fugs have put in print and on record other material which defies analysis due to its total de-



Jim Morrison of the Doors

bauchery. And yet America, which has been somewhat obsessed with water and air pollution, somehow has failed to recognize a form of mental pollution potent enough to rob her of her most priceless natural resource—her youth. Few radio executives have taken the absolutely essential position of Gordon McLendon who found it difficult to believe that American young people were hooked on raw sex, marijuana, and birth control pills. But upon listening to his own AM and FM radio stations, he was forced to admit that "there were songs that glorified drug addiction, homosexuality and immorality in general." Some he found not only made permissible, but encouraged fornication and "all variety of things that would have been called immoral twenty years ago."

McLendon listened to the lyrics of **Satisfaction** (trying to make some girl), **Sock It To Me Baby**, **Let's Spend the Night Together**, **Rhapsody in the Rain** (a couple makes love in a parked car to the rhythm of the windshield wipers), **Day Tripper** (glorifying a prostitute who plays one-night stands), **Running Around the World** (LSD), **Get Off My Cloud** (marijuana), **Straight Shooter** (heroin), etc. and decided to fulfill his moral obligation to America's youth by dumping the records.

Jazz critic Gene Lees has also noted the harmful effects of rock. He has witnessed the relationship between rock, pot and revolution and the relationship between music and its influence on the state. In the October 1970 issue of **High Fidelity**, Lees commented, "If rock music continued as a major influence in entertainment, I felt, the country was in for an era of mounting violence. It is always difficult to document relationships between music and social tendencies. But most people I know who are professionally involved in music believe they exist."

Lees further states, "About three years ago, having caught the reference to drugs indeed, the exhortation of their use—buried in a lot of rock and folk-rock lyrics, I wrote an article, suggesting that if this continued, the country was in for a wave of drug use that could shake its foundations."

He believes that rock music has given young people a virulent fever and if rock is continually poured into their ears, "you've invented a sure-fire formula for trouble." He also believes, "if you asked me whether rock music has been a symptom or a cause of America's terrible problems with its young people, I would be inclined to say, 'both—but primarily a cause.' Rock music has widened the inevitable and normal gap between generations, turned it from something healthy—and absolutely necessary

Grand Funk Railroad

to forward movement—into something negative, destructive."

According to recent findings, hard rock music is not conducive to digestion, not appropriate for driving in heavy, congested traffic and downright dangerous for cases of hypertension (since it can raise blood pressure to a dangerous point). But, there are also frightening dangers involved for the youth in the physical, moral and spiritual spheres. Although teenagers at psychedelic "concerts" tell you they enjoy the beat and the lights, nonetheless both can be harmful. 68 flashes per second of the strobe can freak out the iris and optic nerve centers, and right now there is overwhelming evidence that rock 'n' roll is having a decidedly harmful effect on the hearing of our teens. Many of America's youth could well be deaf by the age of 25 and others with hearing losses of a substantial nature.

Rock 'n' roll has been banned in some countries (Russia, Spain, Indonesia) and even Saigon was forced to eliminate all twist songs in the early '60s because it was not compatible with the country's morality law and anti-Communist struggle. The Beatles personally have been banned in Russia, Indonesia, South Africa, and Israel. These nations were not interested in experiencing the many side effects that necessarily accompany such a rock or Beatle production. In all too many countries, riots and bloodshed resulted, for as John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas admitted in 1967, any pop performers "by carefully controlling the sequence of rhythms" can create audience hysteria. "We know how to do it," he said. "Anybody knows how to do it." The **Saturday Evening Post** further reported that the Mamas and the Papas instigated a riot in Phoenix mainly to test their theory that it could be done scientifically. They had a riot! Is it any wonder that beat music, which has caused so much havoc, has been labeled by Dimitri Tiomkin as "a return to savagery," by Dr. Frances Braceland, psychiatrist at Hartford's Institute of Living, "cannibalistic" and even, surprisingly, by David Susskind as "garbage!"

When the Beatles began their trek into hard rock, the **New York Times** reported "fighting all over Britain." "Rarely a night passes," stated the **Times**, without an outbreak in some town or other. Sometimes it is a mere skirmish involving a few hundred policemen, but most often there is a battle with broken legs, cracked ribs and bloody noses." The **Times** also mentions that the words the Beatles shouted at their audiences "tend not to be of the sort reproducible in newpapers." Because of such antics even the Beatles' press officer, Derek Taylor, stated that the Beatles were rude, profane and vulgar, and when their vulgarity was printed in John Lennon's blasphemous and filthy book **A Spaniard in the Works** (which newsmen agreed could not be printed in a family newspaper), **Parade** magazine wrote, "Parents who believe the Beatles are a quartet of fine, wholesome, uplifting musicians who hold womanhood in highlight and respect, might do well to peruse Lennon's second work for an insight into at least one literate Beatle's morality and mentality."

Yet few have fully understood the impact of rock 'n' roll or the Beatles. Rock music according to **Cavalier**, "is the revolution." It is not only subversive, says **Cavalier**, it is also giving the rebelling teenager his first victory in the initial revolutionary struggle for independence and detachment from an increasingly restricting bourgeoisie." Not unexpectedly, **Cavalier's** article concludes with a quote from Chairman Mao, "The sounds of a thousand musical freaks are news bulletins of a youth revolution. It is the voice of change. As Mao once said. . .'Now the cock crows, dawn breaks over the world, And from a thousand places arises the swelling music. Never were poets so inspired!"

The hard fact is that in this present revolutionary era, heavy beat music has become the catalyst for the young radicals in their announced plans not only to destroy Western culture, but to dethrone God. And few can really deny that the Beatles, Rolling Stones, etc., have played and are playing a strategic and crucial role in the spiritual and cultural demise of the West and in the proposed destruction of Christianity throughout the world.

Rock 'n' roll has become to the drug pusher what the hand is to the glove. "Drug-taking is nothing new to the music business," admitted one music industry spokesman, "but it has always been a secretive thing. No one went around boasting about it, but now it is really getting out of hand." The music reviewer for **Holiday** magazine concurs. When he pondered the question, "Is it possible that the record producers have been fooled by the jargon of the song—have put out such discs not knowing what they mean?" He demurs by stating, "It is unlikely because it is impossible to be in the music business long without seeing pot smoked. The terminology of narcotics is widely known and understood in the industry, both by artists, recorders and producers. . . In songs meant for children of 12 and even younger, they proclaim that it is wise, hip and inside to dissolve your responsibilities and problems of a difficult

world into the mists of marijuana, LSD, or heroin."

Literally hundreds of drug-pushing discs are available for our teenagers' consumption: **A Day in the Life, Along Comes Mary, Buy For Me The Rain, Coloured Rain, Connection, Don't Bogart That Joint, Eight Miles High, Faster Than the Speed of Life, Fixing A Hole, Glass Onion, I Had Too Much To Dream, Journey to the Center of the Mind, Jumping Jack Flash, Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds, Magic Carpet Ride, Mellow Yellow, Magical Mystery Tour, Mainline Prosperity Blues, Mary Jane, Merry-Go-Round, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Tambourine Man, Norwegian Wood, Penny Lane, Pusher Man, Rose Colored Glasses, Rollin' Machine, She's A Rainbow, Strawberry Fields Forever, Sunshine Girl, Sunshine Superman, Two Thousand Light Years From Home, Voyage Into the Golden Screen, Yellow Submarine, You Turn Me On,** etc., etc., ad infinitum ad nauseam.

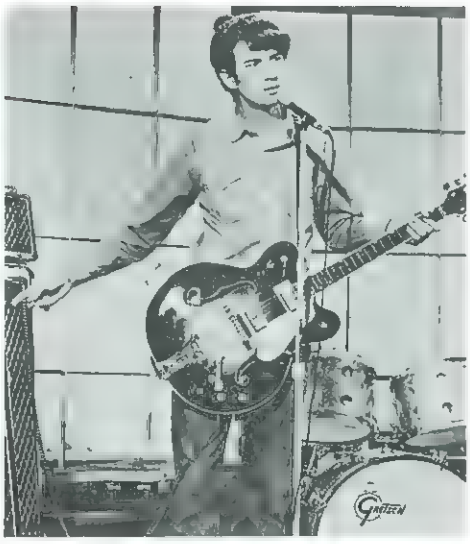
One has only to check any music center to see the quantity of "underground rock" or "underground music" (now termed "progressive rock") and realize that by definition these records are to be listened to under the influence of drugs.

Some albums are so obvious that no code sheet is necessary. The Amboy Dukes' **Journey to the Center of the Mind** carries on the front cover of the jacket every piece of drug smoking equipment imaginable. And, who could miss what the Jefferson Airplane were trying to impart in **White Rabbit**, with such lyrics as, "One pill makes you larger, and one pill makes you smaller, and the one that mother gives you, don't do anything at all. Go ask Alice when she's ten feet tall, and if you go chasing rabbits, and you know you are going to fall, tell them a hooka-smoking caterpillar has given you the call. . .feed your head, feed your head." **Acapulco Gold** reflects the fact that the best marijuana comes from the state of Guerrero in Mexico. Grand Funk Railroad's **High on a Horse** and Dr. Hook's **Freaker's Ball** and **Get My Rocks Off** are also drug saturated.

The **New York Times** reported that lyrics of songs have pushed way beyond the tame rhymes of the past, and have moved into the world of pills, marijuana, and LSD. **Time** magazine wrote that **Rainy Day Women** by Bob Dylan was taken off the air by many radio stations because of its drug implications. It turned out that "Rainy Day Woman" in junky lingo was a marijuana cigarette. "Better than half of all pop music is inspired by LSD experience," contends Mrs. Judith Kuch in the **Columbus Citizen Journal**, May 9, 1967. She says "the Monkees' number **I'm a Believer** is ostensibly a love song, but we all know it refers to drugs. So do many of the songs the Beatles sing, like **Tomorrow Never Knows**, which ends like a page of advice from a psychedelic manual."

Dr. Hook and the Medicine Ball Caravan

Mike Nesmith of the Monkees



There are a few like George Marek, head of RCA Victor, who personally feels anyone playing around with the concept of LSD is bad news. Said Marek in 1966, "I feel these songs are wrong for the youth, even if they are by Bob Dylan, who is a very good artist. The danger is that the taking of drugs will be made more and more the smart thing to do."

Narcotics, of course, are dangerous even when administered under the care of a physician. Both heroin and marijuana are exceedingly dangerous. Heroin is the strongest and most addictive opium derivative and is either sniffed into the nasal passages through the nose or mixed in water and heated to form a solution and injected intravenously with a hypodermic directly into the bloodstream. Marijuana is a derivative from the hemp weed, which affects the nervous system and the brain of the user, causing mental unbalance for varying periods of time in which a sufficient dose of the active substance (Tetrahydrocannabianol) is capable of producing all the hallucinatory and psychotic effects relative to LSD, conceded to be one of the most powerful drugs known.

Repeated use of heroin produces psychological and physical dependence in which the user has an overwhelming compulsion to continue using the drug. Under heroin the body develops a tolerance for it in the bloodstream and virtually all bodily functions are attuned to that presence. Of course, once the victim has the habit, he stops at nothing to satisfy it, and since heroin is considered incurably addictive, when the narcotic is no longer in the body, death can result even during the withdrawal process.

Marijuana is no less to be desired. Edward R. Cass, Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, in an address before the National Conference School Medical Society, said, "I recently had the privilege of spending several days with Dr. I.C. Chopra, Director of Government Research at New Delhi, India. Dr. Chopra and his father have gained worldwide scientific acclaim for their marijuana research and have written numerous books and reports on the subject. The doctor told me that his country has had 2,000 years of experience in all forms of marijuana, and until 1959 the drug was legal and socially accepted throughout India. In 1959 the India Government finally decided that the use of marijuana had caused such severe social and economic problems that it could no longer be tolerated, and laws were passed which prohibit sale, importation and possession."

Dr. Robert W. Baird, in testimony before the House Select Committee on Crime in 1969, bluntly stated, "Anyone who smokes marijuana, whether it be a doctor or lawyer, nun or priest, already has a mental problem. They are taking it to escape reality, to get high, to relax. I do not care what euphemism you want to employ, they are mentally ill."

In his testimony Dr. Baird pointed out 25 important facts about marijuana that should be considered before anyone calls for the legalization of the drug. It distorts time, perception, concentration and emotions. In fact, he testified that one of his patient's mother had died with a coronary and when he brought the youngster to the office and announced to him that his mother had died, the kid, being high on "grass," started to break out in uncontrollable laughter.

Furthermore, as one of Dr. Baird's patients pointed out, you will always find in a group smoking marijuana at least one who will suggest going on to stronger materials and since the powers of concentration and rationalization have been altered by marijuana, it takes little prompting from them to push the rest to stronger drugs.

Two medical men, Dr. Harold Kolansky (Child Analysis Division, Philadelphia Association for Psychoanalysis) and Dr. William T. Moore (Hahnemann Medical College of Philadelphia), studied thirty-eight individuals from 13 to 24 years of age, all of whom smoked marijuana two or more times weekly between 1965 and 1970. All showed adverse psychological effects. Some showed neurological signs and symptoms. Eight developed psychoses and four attempted suicide. Included in these cases were 13 unmarried female patients who became sexually promiscuous while using marijuana and seven became pregnant. According to the doctors' findings, "These patients consistently showed very poor social judgment, poor attention span, poor concentration, confusion, anxiety, depression, apathy, passivity, indifference, and often, slowed and slurred speech." Further the doctors reported, "There was marked interference with personal cleanliness, grooming, dressing, and study habits or work or both," and again, "The decline in academic performance was in direct proportion to the frequency and amount of smoking." The two men concluded, "Clearly, there is, in our patients, a demonstration of an interruption of normal psychological adolescent growth processes following the use of marijuana; as a consequence, the adolescent may reach chronological adulthood without achieving adult mental functioning or emotional responsiveness."

Dr. Gabriel G. Nahos of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons in his book **Marijuana—Deceptive Weed** admits

that marijuana intoxication can lead to permanent brain damage. By studying two different groups of Berbers in Morocco (one group smoking marijuana and one group abstaining) Nahos found that marijuana not only has a deleterious effect on the population, but increases the problems of tuberculosis.

Unfortunately, a semantical argument has developed over the usage of the words "addictive" and "dependent." Some argue that the drug is not addictive, but rather the user only becomes dependent on it. Others, like Dr. Hardin Jones of the Donner Laboratory at the University of California (Berkeley), maintain that marijuana is habit-forming and with continued use it is addictive. Naturally, the argument makes little difference since (1) few are so sophisticated as to see any difference between "addictive" and "dependent" and (2) since it takes the user away from reality and removes his normal inhibitions, marijuana is harmful apart from either word. Smith, Kline & French Laboratories, in a special report prepared primarily for educators, found marijuana not only impairing the user's ability to drive an automobile, but producing such physical effects as dizziness, dry mouth, dilated pupils and burning eyes, urinary frequency, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting.

And one world-famous authority on marijuana, Dr. Constandinos J. Miras, of the University of Athens, who has been studying man and marijuana for over twenty-five years, found marijuana users to have abnormal brain wave readings and marked behavioral changes. Longtime users, for example, revealed chronic lethargy and loss of inhibitions for two years after their usage. Many of his subjects were slipping into less demanding jobs as the habit got a firmer grip on them and were variously depressed and exalted, not always sure when they were having hallucinations. Others went through a rapid succession of physical changes—crying, laughing, sluggishness, hunger for sugar, hallucinating. The idea of the so-called harmless use of marijuana is either ignorance or deception.

The hallucinogens popularly known as psychedelics (since they produce sensations distorting time, space, sound and color) include LSD, STP and DMT. All hallucinogens create hallucinations which lessen the user's ability to discriminate between fact and fancy, and studies indicate that LSD may cause chromosome damage which could result in mental deficiencies and blood diseases in children born to users. One of the foremost authorities in the United States on LSD is Dr. J. Thomas Ungerleider. He states that, "LSD has been called a conscious-expanding drug. In fact, it is quite the reverse. It decreases one's ability to select and pay attention. Therefore, it decreases conscious functions. Sensations do become intensified. Perception, however, is not enhanced, and visual and auditory acuteness are not revolutionized, but rather are distorted." Since LSD dulls the user's objective judgment, which is replaced by purely subjective values, Dr. Ungerleider says, "LSD seems to affect a person's value system."

Then, too, both amphetamines and barbiturates are dangerous drugs. Amphetamines, often called pep pills, produce a feeling of excitation which usually manifests itself in appetite loss with an increasing ability to go without sleep for long periods of time. The most common amphetamines are Benzedrine (Bennies), Dexedrine (Dexies) and Methadrine (crystal or speed). The danger with amphetamines as well as barbiturates is the psychological desire to continue using the drugs. The most common barbiturates are Amytal (Blue Heavens), Nembutal (Yellow Jackets) and Seconal (Red Devils or Red Birds). In the jargon of drug addicts, barbiturates in general are referred to as "goof-balls" and affect the central nervous system and the brain by slowly depressing the mental and physical functions of the body. A person under the influence of a barbiturate will be disoriented to time, place and person and may experience delusions and hallucinations.

In the Sea of Holes on the way to Pepperland *(Yellow Submarine, 1968)*

Obviously, such drugs cannot be equated with apple pie and vanilla ice cream. And, any record company or rock 'n' roll group that lends respectability to such drugs is not only immoral but criminal. And yet, the single greatest offenders (because of their vast popularity) are the Beatles—the missionaries of the drug culture!

The University of Wisconsin student newspaper, **The Daily Cardinal**, stated in 1968 that the Beatles have "proselytized the use of drugs so subtly that words and conceptions once only common to drug users are found in sentences of teenyboppers and statesmen alike." Such a charge, of course, will doubtless be met with incredulity by many parents whose teens are caught up in the Beatles' orbit. And many who religiously worship the quartet will vigorously protest such an accusation. Still, in the Beatles' own authorized biography by Hunter Davies the world is informed that they "have used drug slang in their songs." And Davies' only comment was he found it passing strange that several deliberate slang obscenities went unnoticed. For example, he notes that the Beatles were well aware of the sexual implications of the fireman in **Penny Lane**, "keeping his engine clean" and that the "finger pie" referred to is "an old Liverpool obscenity used by Liverpool lads about Liverpool lasses."

When **Time** reported in 1967 that **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** album was "drenched in drugs," Beatle enthusiasts immediately protested. Yet Davies acknowledges that the one album which "showed many traces of their interest in drugs" was **Sgt. Pepper. Time** further states the Beatles' flirtation with drugs and the drop-out attitude behind such songs like **A Day in the Life**, (removed from BBC because of its drug implications), disturbs many fans and worried parents. In the **Sgt. Pepper** album, Ringo Starr quiveringly says, "I get high with a little help from my friends." **Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds** invokes a drug-inducing hallucination, and even the initials of the title spell out LSD, though the Beatles plead

Paul McCartney and the Nowhere Man

sheer innocence. Most, however, do not take the Beatles seriously since **Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds** was advertised in posters with the letters LSD underlined. **Time** further says that the overall theme of drugs is no coincidence, since all four Beatles have admitted taking LSD occasionally. And concluded, "the fact remains that when the Beatles talk—about drugs, the war in Vietnam, religion—millions listen, and this is the new situation in the pop music world."

In a 1967 article entitled "The New Far-Out Beatles," **Life** magazine quoted Paul McCartney to the effect that LSD was a universal cure-all. McCartney says, "After I took it, it opened my eyes. We only use 1/10 of our brain. Just think what we could accomplish if we could only tap that hidden part! It could mean a whole new world. If politicians would take LSD, there wouldn't be any more war or poverty or famine." In the Beatles' biography, Jane Asher acknowledges McCartney was on LSD; in fact the house "was full of the stuff." And Paul himself agrees although he insists he was the last of the four to try pot and LSD.

According to the official accounting, the Beatles' introduction to drugs began in Hamburg, Germany, where they vulgarly entertained the Germans by shouting in English "Nazis" and told them "to fuck off." John says, "We learned from the Germans that you could stay awake by eating slimming pills, so we did that." Although the pills were supposed to be pretty harmless, they moved on to others like Black Bombers and Purple Hearts. From this the four began to take marijuana. John, being the more bizarre of the quartet, hid his marijuana in a tool box since he had decided to bury it in his garden in case the police came. But as Davies reports, he had it in the box but he "never really got around to digging a hole for it." By July 1967, the Beatles, throwing caution to the wind, signed a full-page ad-

vertisement in the **London Times** calling for the legalization of marijuana in Britain. Then, too, it was while under the influence of marijuana that not only the **Sgt. Pepper** album, but **Magical Mystery Tour** rolled off the assembly line. Davies reports in his biography that the Beatles arrived at EMI Studios at 7:30 one evening to record **Magical Mystery Tour**, but only had the title and a few bars of music. Paul played the opening bars on the piano, showing the others how it would go. Davies says that Paul, "gestured a lot with his hands and shouted flash, flash, flash, saying it would be like a commericial. . . (John) opened the sporran and took out some pot, which he lit, then passed it around. They all had a drag."

From marijuana the four turned to LSD. Lennon frankly states that LSD was the drug which really pointed the way. He says, "I was suddenly struck by great visions when I first took acid. But you have got to be looking for it before you possibly find it." Davies notes that it was through drugs that they found out about themselves, and also records that their most creative year was 1967—"the year of LSD, and Maharishi." But he adds, "by August, 1967, they had given up drugs." The **New York Times** explains that it was during the weekend with the guru that they were sure that drugs were of no use. But, few accept this with any permanent degree of validity. In November, 1968, John Lennon was convicted for the possession of marijuana and fined $360. Scotland Yard's dogs sniffed out the drug when they raided John and his Japanese mistress's apartment. They found traces of marijuana in a cigarette rolling machine, in an empty film tin, 219 grains in an envelope and in a binocular case. Undoubtedly, Lennon was kicking himself for not having dug that hole in the garden!

And by April, 1969, Scotland Yard again pressed into service a three-year-old Labrador, especially trained to sniff out marijuana, and found George Harrison and his wife, Patty, with enough pot for 120 cigarettes. Both pleaded guilty and were fined $600 apiece.

But the most telling testimony that the Beatles are still sanctioning drugs is found in their 1968 album, **The Beatles**, which contains the song **Glass Onion**. The lyrics read, "I told you about strawberry field [referring to **Strawberry Fields Forever**, a piece written during their "creative-drug-year-of-1967," which the radicals and hippies enjoy listening to under the influence of pot], You know the place where nothin is real, Well here is another place you can go, Where everything flows." **Revolution 9**, also contained in the same album, is basically comprehensible only under the influence of drugs. Few sane persons could enjoy listening to eight minutes and fifteen seconds of such weird sounds. But, as one college, drug-taking hippie remarked, "It's groovy."

Though inexplicable, **Revolution 9** was used in 1969 as a background music for communion services at Drake University's Wesley Foundation. The liturgy entitled **A Celebration Thing Appropriating the Music of the Beatles** is divided into four parts, each consisting of Beatle music and a focal prayer from Malcolm Boyd's **Are You Running With Me Jesus?** According to the press, the students sang along with the Beatles songs and listened reverently to the instrumental records, since Beatle music "seemed to speak of today and of their own lives." If **Revolution 9** seriously spoke to our generation the United States is already in a cultural depression far more serious than most would care to imagine.

Not only the **Detroit Free Press** declares that **Yellow Submarine** smacks of drug talk, but **Commonweal** charges the Beatles' recording with drug implications. **Time** also reports a Chicago college student, who smokes marijuana regularly, as saying, "You take it when friends get together or when you're going to see **Yellow Submarine**. It's not to solve problems, just to giggle." In drug jargon, submarine-shaped barbiturates (Nembutal) are called Yellow Jackets and are used to submerge the user. Hippies call them "downers," and under their influence the user can experience delusions and hallucinations. Obviously, the drug world of the Beatles progresses unrelentingly. John can emerge from his pad and tell our youth to "turn off your mind, relax and float downstream."

This is why Art Linkletter referred to the Beatles as the "leading missionaries of the acid society." Testifying in 1969 before the House Select Committee on Crime, Mr. Linkletter said that the Beatles, rock music and drug culturist Timothy Leary were strong contributors to the drug crisis facing America today. He said, "Today in the top 40 pop records played by rock groups, I would say at least half of them are a constant secret message to the whole teenage world to drop out, to turn on, to groove with chemicals."

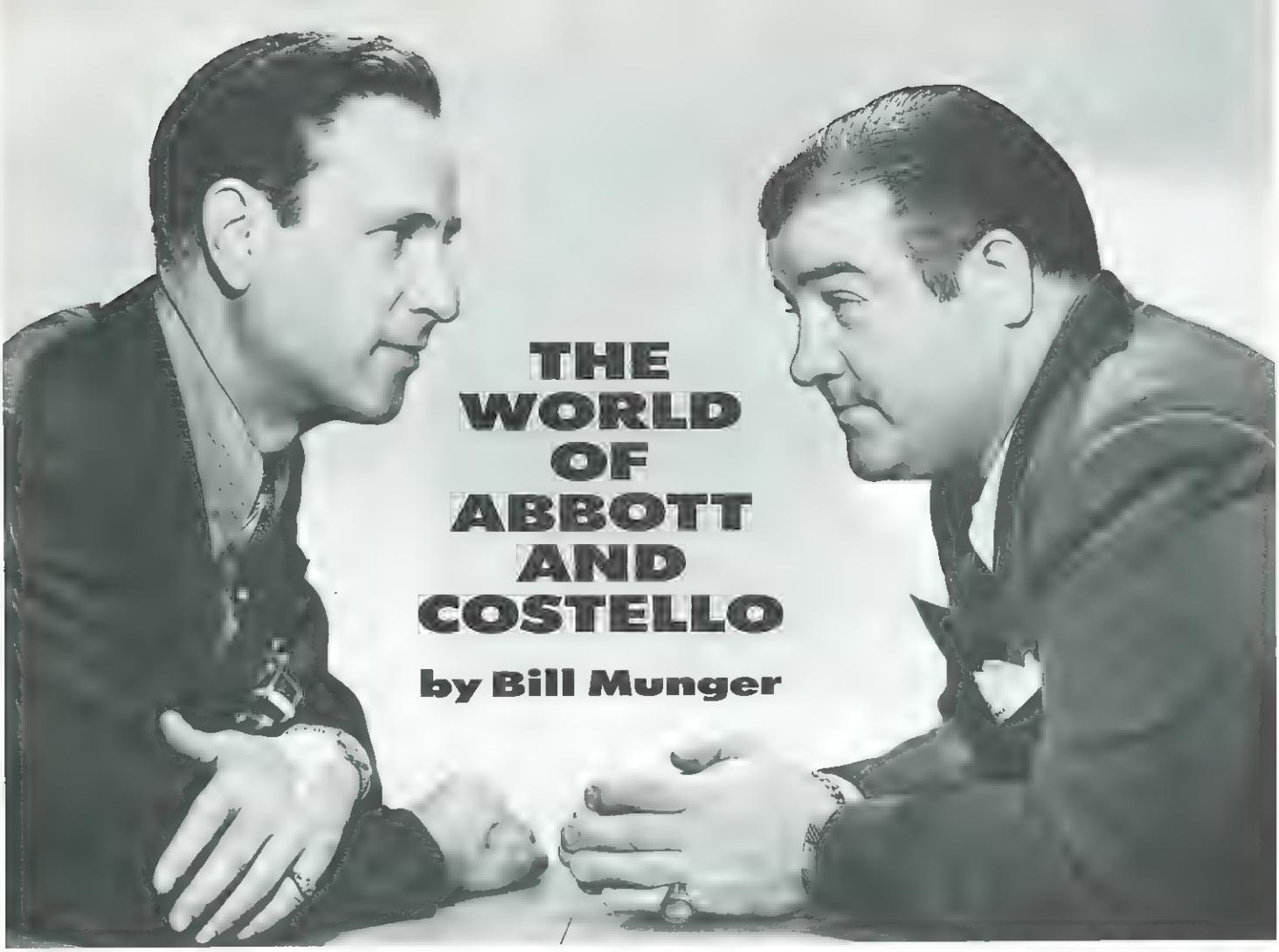
The United Nations **Bulletin on Narcotics** pointed out that the successful Beatle album **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** was the "green light" which began the present avalanche of songs exploiting the drug experience. Says the **Bulletin**, "After **Sgt. Pepper** drug-usage themes in rock and roll visibly increased, and there was progressively less outcry against them, presumably because there were scores of such songs now."

Referring to the Beatles' **Yellow Submarine** album, the **Bulletin** reported, "A yellow submarine is not a banana, but is in British slang, a small yellow capsule containing amphetamines or any other drug. One swallows down a capsule and hence it becomes a 'submarine.'" The **Bulletin** concludes its excellent seven page analysis entitled "Approbation of Drug Usage in Rock and Roll Music" by stating, "The end result of it all perhaps, is that when, sooner or late, an urban child -who lives in the ordinary world, not in the pop world where a drug conviction can be shrugged off—is offered a marijuana cigarette or LSD, he will remember them not as something his health and hygiene teacher spoke warningly about, but as something Mick Jagger, or John Lennon or Paul McCartney has used and enjoyed."

Since the Beatles are still gods to millions of our teenagers today, if drugs are "in" (or considered "in" by the Beatles) they will be considered "in" by the teenagers. For like it or not, whatever the teenagers' gods sanction, the teens have a tendency to sanction. No wonder America is experiencing a drug epidemic!

A word of warning should be sounded to our youth concerning the harmful effects of drugs both individually and nationally. No nation can long survive with her future citizens wallowing in a mire of sin and degradation because their moral inhibitions were destroyed by deconditioning drugs. The Japanese, for example, did not have to put armies in the field with tanks, guns, planes, bullets and bombs when they conquered Manchuria. Instead, as D.C. Parks notes in **Narcotics and Narcotics Addiction**, "Their shock troopers were dope pushers and peddlers. Their guns were syringes; their bayonets were needles; their ammunition was pills, capsules, powders and solutions." Likewise some have argued that the Great Chinese civilization of the Nineteenth Century crumbled when 40% of the people became addicted to opium. Yet tragically, **Time** already concedes that marijuana is changing our culture and one California psychopharmacologist, Dr. Leo Hollister, confesses, "For the first time pot is entrenched in our society, with untold millions using the drug. We have passed the point of no return."

And it must be remembered that under the influence of marijuana, one's will to resist is completely compromised and no one knows this better than Israel when she defeated the Arab nations in six days in June, 1967. Part of the Arab problem according to the Israelis: too many Arab soldiers smoke pot.



THE WORLD OF ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

by Bill Munger

Among film historians who dabble in such matters, it has become fashionable to berate Bud Abbott and Lou Costello for never equalling the standards of Laurel and Hardy and/or the Marx Brothers. In fact, today Bud and Lou don't really have many partisans; they have apologists who enjoyed their films and will readily explain why Bud and Lou never reached those heights and why it is unrealistic to place them on a balance with the likes of Laurel and Hardy on the opposite platform.

1941 was not a good year for comedy unless the bombing of Pearl Harbor strikes you as a laugh-riot. That was the year Abbott and Costello made their first starring comedy, also considered by some to be their best, *Buck Privates.* And while that film wasn't equal to the best of Laurel and Hardy or the Marxes, neither were the films made that year by Laurel and Hardy or the Marxes. Groucho, Harpo and Chico were enveloped by *The Big Store* wherein the singlemost hysterical scene was claimed by Tony Martin performing "The Tenement Symphony." It had been that way for the Marx Brothers at MGM since the death of Irving Thalberg. Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy were even worse off over at Twentieth Century Fox. They were deprived of their rights to improvisation and script consultation, an important part of the working procedure when they made their classic comedies for Hal Roach Studios. The resultant films, commencing with *Great Guns,* were not all that much better than the concurrent Abbott and Costello fare, and markedly less successful at the box office.

Then, too, there was the matter of productivity. It took well over a year to write and produce the Marx Brothers' classic *A Night at the Opera.* Laurel and Hardy usually spent six months apiece on their best features. In 1941 Bud Abbott and Lou Costello made *four* feature films in addition to frequent appearances in night clubs and on radio. Working at that pace, under studio conditions similar to those that had stifled more talented comedians, the wonder is not how funny Abbott and Costello were but that they managed to be funny at all. Bud and Lou starred, over the next fifteen years, in a total of thirty-five features, some better than others but all watchable at the very least. Until the last few years all were highly successful, and the ones made for Universal often meant the difference between red and black ink on that studio's year-end report. Not bad for a couple of guys who met in a grimy Burlesque house in 1929.

William "Bud" Abbott was born either in 1895 in Asbury Park, New Jersey; in 1898 in Atlantic City, or in 1900 at Coney Island. Throughout his career he gave varying combinations of those years and birthplaces, though the first is most likely accurate. His father, Harry Abbott, was working as advance man for the Ringling Brothers Circus and his mother was a bareback rider. When Bud was five, his family established permanent residence in Coney Island where he was soon enrolled in Public School 100. He was enrolled there—this is not to say that he regularly showed up for classes. Bud's childhood was almost a precursor to the Hal Roach "Our Gang" comedies, it being devoted mainly to encounters with kid gangs and relentless truant officers. By fourth grade, his parents had abandoned all hope of education for their son and they allowed Bud to quit P.S. 100 and find work. "Work" for a boy in his day, age and locale usually amounted to odd jobs, sign-painting and acting as a shill in nearby circuses and carnivals. In later years, several Abbott and Costello routines were built around Abbott as a carnival con-man, most notably their "old shell game" bit. That Abbott was so dexterous at manipulating the shells was due to a goodly amount of past experience.

At age fifteen, Abbott was downing beers in a Brooklyn bar one day when a sudden stomach cramp doubled him over. His feet gave way beneath him—then blackness. When he awoke, he found himself on a freighter bound for Norway with, in perfect melodrama fashion, a gruff sea captain the kind who recruited by bribing bartenders to lace the drinks of potential sailors with Essence of Mickey Finn. When the boat and its shanghaied crew reached Bergen, Abbott joined other unwillingly-conscripted men and jumped ship. With no assets save his skills at carnival

con-jobs, he worked his way back to New York, where his family had long given him up for dead.

Abbott's father was now a booker for a burlesque chain and he used his influence to get Bud a job as assistant cashier at the Casino Theatre in Brooklyn. It was one day while he held down this job that Bud, his taste for boating not diminished by his recent experience, went on a river yachting trip. A girl fell overboard and Abbott dove in and rescued her. Years later studio publicity would proclaim that this was the future Mrs. Abbott. The truth is not quite so B-movie inspired. The rescued girl's best friend was a young woman named Betty Smith Pratt and it was Ms. Pratt who became Bud's wife on September 17, 1918.

With a wife to support, Bud set about to enrich his income. He and his older brother, Harry Jr., pooled their respective savings and started a vaudeville show called *Broadway Flashes*. It was a modest success and its revenue—plus funds obtained from some backers Bud found—enabled the brothers to buy the Corinthian Theatre in Rochester, New York, which they rechristened Abbott's Corinthian. One burlesque house led to another and they were soon operating houses in Buffalo, Toronto and Cleveland. Bud himself handled the booking of acts—not an easy position since the big burlesque chains held tight reins on big-name performers. Eventually, the brothers' backers pulled out to invest their capital in the then-surging stock market and the Abbott brothers sold what was left of their theatre network. It was 1929 and Bud took a job in the box office of the Empire Theatre in Brooklyn. He had only been working there for a few months when a chubby comic booked into the Empire for a week. His name was Lou Costello.

His name hadn't always been Lou Costello, of course. When he was born in Paterson, New Jersey in 1908, he was christened Louis Francis Cristillo by his father, a silk mill operator. Lou, his brother Patrick and his sister Maria all had a very strict religious upbringing and attended parochial schools. Looking back on his childhood, Lou was fond of describing himself as a Holy Terror in school and of telling how the teachers often made him write "I'm a bad boy" ad nauseum on the blackboard. It all makes for a fine Hollywood-style biography, since "I'm a bad boy" became a popular Costello catch-phrase, but the truth differs. Lou was usually a well-behaved boy who might occasionally play the role of class clown for attention. And, having none of the girth that he gained in later life, he was also a superb athlete—so much so that his parents consulted with his teachers on the possibility of military school for him. Lou had other ideas. He'd been struck by the lure of the stage and, at age seventeen, decided to leave school to become an actor. His plan was to work his way across country to Hollywood, learning his trade in theatres along the way. He made it as far as Pittsburgh where, to ward off starvation, he took the only available job—working at a slaughterhouse for eight dollars a week. Lou found the job repugnant, especially since the "new boy" was forever being saddled with the dirtiest job, carting away diseased stock. When he made enough money to repay the loans he'd taken before leaving, he returned to Paterson, determined to break into show business without leaving the free room-and-board he had at home.

Hanging around theatres got him involved with a chorus girl and, when she spurned him, he went on a self-destructive binge that culminated in a brief career as a prize fighter. He was gaining weight and that, coupled with his athletic prowess, convinced him he could either become a big success or get killed; at the time, he didn't really care which. Fourteen fights later he was neither, but he was back to his old show business longings and they finally led him to Hollywood.

The year was 1928 and Lou was luckier than most newcomers to the film capital. He got some jobs, mostly at Metro Goldwyn Mayer, lifting scene flats and pushing props around. At the time, whenever stunt men were needed, they were usually drawn from the pool of studio workers. Lou volunteered for every such assignment that came along, danger being no concern, and his agility and strength kept him from serious injury. He doubled for animals, leading men and even Dolores Del Rio ("Of course, my shape was very different, way back then," he said in later years). He also said "When the talkies came in I saw a lot of actors hotfooting it to New York for voice lessons. So I says, if you gotta have voice lessons to be an actor, that's for me." Thus did he describe his departure from Hollywood. The fact of the matter was that, in the flurry to retool their facilities for sound, MGM jettisoned every unneeded expenditure, one Louis Cristillo being among them. There's a story, perhaps apocryphal, that on the day of his release Lou stood outside the iron gates of Metro in Culver City and cried, "I'll be back! Someday, Louis B. Mayer himself will invite me back!" Mayer did, of course, but that wasn't for another thirteen years.

Lou worked his way back towards Paterson, New Jersey, taking odd jobs en route whenever possible around the local theatre, such as it was. In St. Joseph, Missouri, a stroke of luck came in an opening for a "Dutch" comedian and that brought Lou Costello, new stage name and all, into the world of vaudeville. He began playing houses around the east, essaying different characters in different costumes. Most of the time he settled on an undersize checkered coat to emphasize his weight and an undersize derby to make his face seem fatter. Lou was learning the value of a strong comedy character as he learned the staples of the Burlesque comedian—the "bits," unwritten, hand-me-down routines that passed from theatre to theatre and circuit to circuit. He often did the Courtroom bit ("I don't know, your honor—What time do you get up?") but his favorite was Crazy House. The knowledge of these skits and the ability to stage them at a moment's notice or less were the credentials of the burlesque performer. Anyone who hung around the theatre long enough learned them verbatim, which was fortunate in times of personal crisis. Take the time that Costello was playing the Empire Theatre in Brooklyn and found himself minus one straight man. The box office cashier was recruited to fill in and did a marvelous job. His name was Bud Abbott.

Abbott and Costello teamed. Abbott had been around burlesque long enough to know how to deal with bookers and theatre operators. For the next nine years Abbott and Costello played the circuits, sometimes as featured performers, other times as fillers between the strippers. Their paths crossed with comics like Jack Albertson, Rags Ragland, Ed Wynn, Ted Healy, Phil Silvers, Bobby Clark and Eddie Cantor, plus a great many who never advanced past burlesque. Those who did were the ones who created strong characters and were lucky enough to get spotted by Hollywood talent scouts or Broadway angels. Bud Abbott and Lou Costello worked at perfecting their characters, which consisted of a burlesque stock duo the smooth, slick con artist and his stumbling patsy of a partner. They honed their timing on a vast repertoire of comedy routines, but that big break was long in coming. Lou wed a dancer, Anne Battler, and had the first of their three children at a time when burlesque salaries were declining rapidly. Abbott gambled heavily and sometimes lost both his salary and his partner's. Both men, as 1938 rolled around, were in financial trouble.

Their big break came at Loew's State Theatre on Broadway. Ted Collins, otherwise known in the business as Kate Smith's manager, had come to see the feature film on the bill. He was so taken with the fat-and-skinny comedy duo, however, that he signed them for a shot on Kate Smith's radio program. The bit they did was nothing more than a vaudeville stock dialogue—the kind of cleaned-up Burlesque bit they had done thousands of times when playing classier (sans strippers) theatres. But it was well enough received that they became regulars on the Kate Smith Hour, appearing every week to do a routine and trade lines with the Mistress of Ceremonies. Costello, with his cute "bad boy" image was able to get away with numerous slurs on Kate Smith as well as repeated goofs and flubbed lines. They usually strayed from what little script they had, relying instead on their practiced by-play. "It's better this way," Abbott once said, "because Costello fumbles up such things. He's one guy who really gets lost when you give him directions."

Playing it more-or-less by ear, they were a hit on radio, going from the Kate Smith program to guest-shots with Fred Allen, followed by serving as Allen's summer replacement. Nights they worked the more fashionable clubs in and around New York and achieved some critical acclaim in the Broadway review *The Streets of Paris,* with Bobby Clark and Carmen Miranda.

Critical acclaim was all-important when they made their first movie in late 1939, *One Night in the Tropics.* Theirs were clearly supporting roles in a film that was to have been a blockbuster Universal movie musical. Even with songs by Jerome Kern, Dorothy Fields and Oscar Hammerstein II, it didn't turn out that way. Abbott and Costello later described the whole venture as "an indiscretion better overlooked." The critics hammered away at the production but generally had favorable comments for Bud and Lou, so much so that Universal later re-released the film as *Carribean Holiday* with the names of Abbott and Costello replacing Allan Jones and Nancy Kelly as stars. Universal also made plans to star their new comedy team in a feature film.

That film was *Buck Privates* and was so successful that it earned the boys a long-term contract with Universal and got Lou his personal invite from Louis B. Mayer in the form of a concurrent contract with MGM. *Buck Privates* hit at a time when the public wanted light army comedies, what with the war beginning to dominate every aspect of everyones' lives. Bud and Lou played street vendors who, in eluding a policeman, ducked into a recruiting office and wound up in the service. A lengthy induction scene hit home for most people, inasmuch as everyone knew someone who had recently gone through it. Once in basic training, Abbott and Costello got involved with a rich, vainglorious boy, played by Lee Bowman, who wanted out of the army, the sooner the better. It was just not in keeping with the lifestyle to which he was accustomed, even if he was the only private with his own personal valet. The rich boy's transformation to a patriotic, compassionate soldier served as the main plot, with the Andrews Sisters along for songs. The funniest scene drew on Costello's own past as his screen character was coerced into a boxing match with someone obviously his superior.

The success of *Buck Privates* can best be measured by what it spawned—immediate full-scale production on Abbott and Costello films. The contracts, which netted Bud and Lou about $6000 per week, were being notarized even as the writers churned out the screenplays at breakneck pace. Writing an Abbott and Costello film was not all that difficult. Having found the formula in *Buck Privates,* Universal had every intention of adhering closely to it. Subsequent films would differentiate substantially from it just twice, and then only because of a chance turn of events. But the three other A&C films to hit theatres before 1941 stuck closely over all to the elements of *Buck Privates,* and two even placed Bud and Lou in the armed forces. And, as with their source film, they and most of the following films employed samplings of the burlesque routines that Abbott and Costello had done for years. *In the Navy* had Dick Powell as the male romantic lead, after the fashion of Lee Bowman in *Buck Privates.* Instead of being a rich kid proving himself in the service, Powell played a rich crooner who enlisted under his real name to prove something. Again, the Andrews Sisters were employed for musi-

cal moments and, from the burlesque repertoire, Bud and Lou brought out the Shell Game routine and the convoluted mathematical proof that 13 times 7 equals 28. No matter that the jokes were ancient; the public loved it.

Hold That Ghost followed *In the Navy* and afforded Abbott and Costello a brief respite from the military. It also began their series of ghost/mystery comedies of which there would be eight more. Following the furlough they were back in uniform, this time that of the Air Force, for *Keep 'Em Flying*. Apart from some mistaken identity involving Martha Raye as identical twins, no new ground was broken. Not that the moviegoers cared much.

1942 started off with what should have been a good film, *Ride 'Em Cowboy*, involving Dick Foran as a movie cowboy who visits a dude ranch to prove himself. That in itself was no reason for optimism, but the dude ranch setting afforded plenty of opportunity for physical comedy most notably a diving board routine with Costello. The script also incorporated Costello's best burlesque bit, Crazy House, with Lou as a patient in an insane asylum coping with the steady stream of incoming loonies. The latter bit was ruined, however, by its manner of presentation—the whole thing done over in Indian motif to give it a place in this film, staged as a dream which successfully negated its premise of one sane man in a Crazy House. A wild chase involving Indians and interpolating stock western footage provided the climax.

While making *Ride 'Em Cowboy*, Abbott and Costello began commuting to MGM for the first of their picture committments. The studio had selected *Rio Rita*, the musical that catapulted the team of Wheeler and Woolsey to prominence. It seemed a good choice, but the result was one of A&C's weakest early films. Meanwhile, Universal was unsure what the market would be for more service comedies, so Abbott and Costello closed out 1942 with *Pardon My Sarong* and another mystery-comedy, *Who Done It?*

1943 brought two films with it, *It Ain't Hay* and *Hit the Ice*. The former was based on Damon Runyon's story, "Princess O'Hara" and was peopled with Runyonesque gangsters. *Hit the Ice* was set at a ski chalet with another gangster theme in evidence. Sheldon Leonard, who has rarely played anything else, was the head gangster. There would have been at least one more Abbott and Costello film in 1943 but for two tragedies which came in rapid succession.

First, Costello was felled by rheumatic fever. His friends blamed it in part on the kind of life he had been leading. New money had meant a lot to Lou Costello and, despite a grueling schedule at the studio, he and Abbott had taken to enjoying Hollywood night life. They frequented several night spots, often giving all-night impromptu performances, often investing money in some of the clubs. Whether or not all of this contributed to Costello's illness, his convalesence was a debilitating one. He was frustrated by the money being passed up in radio, night club and record offers. He

was annoyed by doctors' orders that kept him from enjoying the money he had. But, little by little, he got enough of his strength back that it was deemed safe to resume their radio show.

The afternoon of the broadcast, Abbott and his partner were rehearsing at the studio when a phone call came—one-year-old Lou Costello Junior had somehow escaped from his crib and crawled into the family swimming pool where he drowned. Lou Junior had been loved and pampered by his father as few children ever are. The news hit Lou Senior hard, and Abbott began making arrangements to replace Lou for that evening's show. When air-time came, Mickey Rooney was there but Costello insisted in carrying on as planned. His performance was fine, flawed only by the timing problems that were to be expected after his long lay-off. After the show he broke down completely and remained incommunicado for several days after. When Abbott was finally able to reach him, he proposed some sort of memorial tribute in the name of Lou Junior. Within a year a youth center was under way to bear the child's name, funded equally by Bud and Lou.

In Society (1944) was the first film for Universal after Costello's recovery. It was scripted so as to afford Costello an easy shooting schedule and the entire climax, a fire-engine chase sequence, was made up of footage shot for W.C. Fields' *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break*. Another MGM film followed, *Lost in a Harem*, incorporating the classic Niagara Falls routine (slightly altered) that had been a burlesque mainstay. The routine, sometimes known as "Slowly, I turned. . ." was also used by the Three Stooges in at least three of their shorts.

Another burlesque bit, "Who's on First?", afforded the highlight in the first Abbott and Costello film of 1945, *The Naughty Nineties*. A number of old routines had involved mix-ups of interrogative pronouns with proper names, and Abbott and Costello had probably done all of them at one time or another in burlesque. In their films and on television they did at least three different variations, the earliest incarnation when Costello would try and get directions to a street he did not know was named What Street which was located in the vicinity of Which Boulevard. ("Where is this place I'm supposed to go?" "What Street!" "That's what I'm askin' ya—what street?" "That's right!" and so forth) Another version, which they used in *Who Done It?* had Abbott trying to explain to Costello what volts are and mauling the whole field of electronics in the process. ("Watts are volts," Abbott says for the nth time. Costello: "That's what I'm tryin' to find out—What's volts?" Abbott is trying to explain how the murder victim was electrocuted: "He got fifty thousand volts!" Costello: "That oughta be enough to elect anybody!") But the most famous version, and the one which became their trademark to the extent they did jokes about over-using it, was "Who's on First?" Oddly enough, the best versions of the routine are radio transcriptions. They committed it to film several times, never with full impact. The version in *Naughty Nineties* is preceded by much dull material and appears to be an aggregate editing of several takes, thus dulling the continuity. Another version, done on their filmed TV show of the fifties, fails because Abbott introduces it with the equivalent of "Well, now we're going to do our famous 'Who's on First?' routine," thereby reminding everyone how old it is and how Costello is merely faking the naivete involved in not understanding the names of the baseball players. ("Who's on first, What's on second and I Don't Know is on third," says Abbott. Costello, puzzled, asks "Who's on first?" "Absolutely," responds Abbott. From there on, Costello's attempts to clarify the line-up only make the both of them more and more furious at each other.) Costello sometimes claimed that he wrote the routine; at other times, he readily admitted that it and much of their material came straight out of burlesque.

The Naughty Nineties was followed by *Here Come the Co-eds*, a college campus farce, and *Abbott and Costello in Hollywood* (1945). The latter was their last for MGM and a very weak effort. Apart from a bit in which Costello was mistaken for a dummy and hurled off a balcony, the many opportunities for humor on a movie lot were neglected.

During the last days of production on *In*

Hollywood, Abbott and Costello finally encountered the kind of difference of priorities that almost every comedy team met at some time in their careers. It was perhaps inevitable; Costello was a free-spender around town. He and Abbott had both spent a good deal of their earnings on the trappings of new wealth: swimming pools, mink coats, expensive jewelry (including very large rings they wore off-camera) and some money put into horse-racing. Costello attracted a number of sycophants, the kind that are inevitable barnacles for anyone with money flaunted openly. Costello's hangers-on sought to ingratiate themselves with well-laden praise for him. More than a few times he was told that he was 90% of the act; that anyone could do Abbott's job. ("How come it isn't Costello and Abbott?") He was reminded that Stan Laurel's salary was usually twice that of Oliver Hardy and he was urged to put Abbott under personal contract and to regulate his salary as he, Costello, saw fit. Whether Lou ever broached the subject to his partner is unknown, but Bud, who knew that burlesque straight men were interchangeable, couldn't have helped but hear some of the rumblings. Then the feud over the trappings of wealth began. Whatever Abbott bought, Costello would criticize. "Everything I buy is in good taste," Abbott was quoted in rebuttal. "Anything that Costello buys is just pure dog." There were recurring slurs over each others' investments and then, one day, Costello discovered that the maid he had recently fired was now on staff at Abbott's home, presumably divulging all the secrets of the Costello household. Costello asked Abbott to dismiss her; Abbott responded in the negative, and rather rudely at that. An offer for the duo to play the Roxy in New York was fielded by Costello, solo. But Abbott, determined to prove he was not expendable, insisted on playing the engagement also.

The gossip columns buzzed with the news that the duo was going to split; that backstage at the Roxy was No-Man's Land. A two-bit comic named Gerry Abbott, laboring in what was left of burlesque, wired Costello that he was available to team up and keep the famous name alive. Universal Studios announced that the so-called feud was being blown up all out of proportion; that it was just a little spat and soon would be over. Privately, however, the Universal executives ordered the next two scripts be readied as solo Lou Costello movies.

As it turned out, Universal (which hadn't really believed it) was right. It *did* all blow over—exactly why, no one can say for certain. It is probable that Abbott got word of the two solo scripts being written and, concerned about the upkeep payments on all his property, convinced Costello not to take any chances with his own financial situation. Whatever the motives, they were soon back at Universal which left the dilemma of what to do about those two scripts. The solution: Give Abbott roles in each, despite the Costello character having no partner as such in the first and paired with a woman in the second. The result was the two aforementioned Abbott and Costello films that broke the format, by accident and not by design.

The first, *Little Giant* (1946), had no secondary role worthy of Abbott, so he was given two parts in the film and the feeble excuse was made that the two men happened to be twins. Perhaps because of the break in format or the direction of William A. Seiter (who directed Laurel and Hardy in their 1934 classic *Sons of the Desert*), *Little Giant* turned out well. Costello played a sad little bumbler who aspired to become a super-salesman. The film was heavy on pathos (since Abbott was scheduled to be missing, the writers figured on rounding Costello's character a bit) and Lou's performance was very good. He proved he could do without Bud Abbott, if the need ever arose.

The second, *The Time of Their Lives,* was a new twist on the ghost angle, this time with Costello as a ghost confined to the site of his demise during the Revolutionary War because of alleged treason. A letter from George Washington, citing him for heroism, will grant him passageway to Heaven, if and when it can be located. Abbott again played a dual role that was obviously written for someone other than the star's partner. Again, more because of the material than Abbott's abstinence, the results were delightful. Costello proved it again.

The year was now 1947 and the next three films were all back in classic Abbott and Costello situations with none being particularly distinguished. *Buck Privates Come Home* was a sequel to their first starring film. It was supposed to remind people of how good Abbott and Costello were in their first success; it only reminded critics of how little they'd progressed, especially in light of the previous two films' promise. *The Wistful Widow of Wagon Gap* was a western with Marjorie Main that managed to parody some of the traditional western story elements. *The Noose Hangs High,* a ghost comedy, was made for an independent company, Eagle-Lion. Despite a strong supporting cast, it had the misfortune to be going into general release at about the same time as the team's next film, another ghost comedy and far superior.

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948) has attained a kind of legendary stature, perhaps because of the absurdity of its title. Universal-International was through with their famous stock company of monsters and there seemed no harm in allowing Abbott and Costello to annihilate what was left. Glenn Strange, who had played the title monster before, was recruited. Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi were added as, respectively, Wolfman and Dracula for cast insurance. The result was, oddly, a very funny film which did not portray any of the monsters in a mocking light robbing them of their menacing auras. Chaney's performance could possibly be termed as self-parody but it was wholly in keeping with the Wolfman mythos, even to the extent of expertly-rendered special effects. All of the Universal monster films had included some element of humor—or could have, without destroying the mood—and that usually came from the juxtaposition of innocent, unsuspecting people (like the town drunk) stumbling upon the monster. *Meet Frankenstein* was an entire movie of that sort with Lugosi playing straight for Costello's hysterics. The encounters were used sparingly and there was an ample amount of the usual Abbott and Costello fumblings. The end result was, as the title would denote, both a horror film and a comedy with the accent, understandably, on the latter. Costello's performance was particularly good. The birth of a

daughter to him during production kept him from his periodic spells of depression.

The film was highly successful; to the Universal executives that should have denoted the value of more care and imagination in future Abbott and Costello projects. It didn't. What it denoted to them was The New Formula. They began laying plans for more Abbott and Costello Meet the Monsters films.

The boys finished out 1948 with a non-musical version of *Mexican Hayride,* and began 1949 with *Abbott and Costello Meet the Killer, Boris Karloff.* The script was as unwieldy as the title. (The *New York Times'* review consisted of the word "blah!") But it cashed in on the success of *Meet Frankenstein,* which is what was intended. For United Artists they made a jungle spoof, *Africa Screams,* which had good elements that somehow never cohered. Back at Universal they made *Abbott and Costello in the Foreign Legion,* and this time the *New York Times* had a slightly longer review: "Fooey." In 1951 *Abbott and Costello Meet the Invisible Man* was a bit better, with Sheldon Leonard again playing a gangster. And *Comin' Round the Mountain* was tolerable though rather lacking in any memorable scene.

By this time Bud and Lou were devoting a goodly segment of their time and material to television. They hosted every fourth week on the Colgate Comedy Hour and made numerous guest appearances on other shows. Warner Brothers signed them for a two-picture deal: *Jack and the Beanstalk,* scripted by Lou's brother, Patrick, was a fairy tale in the Wizard of Oz vein, employing the gimmick of using color in the fantasy scenes and black-and-white in the "real" world. The film lacked any sense of spectacle and was low on humor. The other Warners picture, wholly in color, was *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd,* most notable for Charles Laughton's self-parody of his Captain Bligh role in MGM's 1935 *Mutiny on the Bounty.* Before 1952 was over, Abbott and Costello also did *Lost in Alaska* as part of their new one-picture-a-year deal with Universal.

In 1953 that picture was *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars. (New York Times:* ". . .and it's about time!") To be totally accurate, they went to Venus in the film, a science-fictiony spoof that had some good moments with Costello loose in an interplanetary Amazon harem.

In 1953 Abbott and Costello also began their filmed television series, a low-budget production that experienced a surprising longevity in syndication. The half-hour segments were filmed quickly, usually in two or three days, and utilized standing sets on the Universal lot. The set for the front of the apartment house where Bud and Lou lived has done duty in thousands of Universal productions, often redressed to simulate foreign locales. The scripts used virtually every burlesque bit that had ever found its way into an Abbott and Costello film, some written and/or directed by Sidney Fields, himself a former vaudevillian who today writes a Las Vegas newspaper column. Fields, under his own name, played Bud and Lou's landlord and was usually badgering them to find work and pay their rent. The rest of the stock company consisted of Gordon Jones (Mike the Cop), Joe Kirk (Mr. Baccigalupe), Hillary Brooke (Costello's love interest) and Joe Besser. Besser, who later became one of the Three Stooges for a time, played a bizarre character called Stinky, a neighborhood brat attired in Lord Fauntleroy garb. No one thought this odd for a middle-aged balding man. Despite the low budgets, most of the 52 episodes were highly entertaining with the burlesque bits usually receiving better treatment than their feature incarnations.

Production of the TV show was interrupted by a return of Costello's rheumatic fever. It bedded him for two months and also interfered with plans for *Fireman, Save My Child* (1954) which was to have teamed Abbott and Costello with the madcap music of Spike Jones. The film was made, but with Hugh O'Brian and Buddy Hackett in the leads. This unlikely duo was selected because second unit photography, long shots and stunt work, had already been completed using doubles for Abbott and Costello. The idea was to find actors with approximately the same physical builds, perhaps the only time in film history when the stars have been matched to the stunt men.

Costello's recovery was not helped any by another trouble, although he nor Abbott then realized what it would eventually amount to. The Internal Revenue Service discovered irregularities in the tax returns of both men and began a full audit. What it came to was bankruptcy for Abbott. The same mistake—entrusting everything to accountants of questionable ability and honesty—had recently landed the new team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis in similar legal and financial chaos. Martin and Lewis finally squared matters with Uncle Sam and returned to their business which, as far as Abbott and Costello were concerned, was stealing the popularity and jobs that were rightfully meant for Abbott and Costello.

In 1954 *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was the Universal release for Bud and Lou, again mining the monster vein. Boris Karloff played the latter two title roles with a stunt man doubling for Mr. Hyde. While there had been some amusing rapport between Karloff and Costello in *Killer,* most of this outing was forced. The following year it was *Abbott and Costello Meet the Keystone Kops,* a better though financially disappointing production. A cast made up of surviving Mack Sennett veterans and Fred Clark as heavy made the film palatable. In 1956 Abbott and Costello met the Mummy in their last film for Universal Studios. *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* was easily the poorest of their monster films, with long stretches of serious and vapid plot line. The main problem seemed to be the lack of a monster personality, the Mummy being a rather dull subject. Disposed of by Universal, Abbott and Costello made one more film, *Dance With Me, Henry* for United Artists, thoroughly undistinguished and no great magnet at the box office. Bud Abbott and Lou Costello announced to columnists that they were taking a hiatus to mull over future film and television deals. It sounded better than "no studio will hire us."

They picked up some club work in Vegas and New York, but there were long periods of unemployment at a time when neither could afford them. The Internal Revenue Service was demanding payment on long-unreported income and newly-disallowed deductions. They were willing to work out a payment schedule, based on expected future income; the trouble was that no one could say just what Abbott's and Costello's future income might be. Costello had a stroke of fortune: Because of the way the contracts had been originally drawn up, one of Costello's small companies owned

the syndication rights for the filmed television series. Lou's brother Pat found a buyer, and the revenue eased Costello's tax worries. When Abbott found out he demanded half and, failing to get it, readied a lawsuit. If it sounds like Abbott and Costello were on the verge of splitting, that's only because they were. The only steady bookings open to them were as headliners in Las Vegas revues ("Back in Burlesque," Abbott muttered) and those engagements were not profitable. Bud was not above returning their salaries to the hotel via the dice tables in a quest to wipe out his tax troubles with one big winning streak.

Costello took a few single parts where they were available, but that's all he was offered as a single -a few. When it was suggested to him that he should make it known that Costello could be hired, minus Abbott, the word was quietly leaked to the press that the team had gone separate routes. Abbott retired to his ranch to enjoy it for however long remained before the Internal Revenue men could claim it. Costello did the Ed Sullivan Show, the Steve Allen Show and a few dramatic roles including an episode of Wagon Train. He talked of pairing up with a new partner, half-seriously mentioning Dean Martin. His big project was to find a studio that would film an idea a writer had brought him—a bio of New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. No studio came forward on that count, but Columbia signed him for a film about a backwoods-scientist who accidentally enlarged his fiancee (played by Dorothy Provine) to gargantuan proportions. *The Thirty-Foot Bride of Candy Rock,* a film that was as good as you'd expect, was made in late 1958, about the same time Abbott's lawsuit was formally filed. The film was released posthumously. Late the night of March 3, 1959, Costello suffered a heart attack and died.

The death caught everyone unaware. Costello had never been substantially overweight and, after his bouts with rheumatic fever, had even been padded for screen appearances to maintain his plump image. What had happened was that the rheumatic fever had damaged his heart valves in a manner the doctors could not detect.

If Bud Abbott nurtured any ideas about returning to prominence in the entertainment business, they were shattered by Costello's death. And so was Abbott's lawsuit. Lou's estate was thrown into chaos and, just when things were getting straightened out later that year, Costello's widow died. Realizing he'd never see two cents of the syndication money from the TV show, Abbott was forced to sell his beloved ranch. About that time, Universal prepared a package of Abbott and Costello movies for television syndication, and Abbott, who had no real claim on the TV rights, managed to get some funds by threatening legal action. Universal figured it was more economical to pay Abbott off than to allow him to cloud the studio's right to sell the films. That money, plus the money from the ranch, managed to bring Abbott within range of his tax debts. The Internal Revenue men wrote the rest off as uncollectible.

Abbott survived his partner for fifteen years, during which he remained largely inactive. He announced an autobiography, but none materialized. He visited a few TV talk shows, often with genuine words of respect and admiration for his deceased cohort. Money differences aside, he seemed to have a true respect for Lou Costello, both as comic and friend. When the Hanna-Barbera cartoon studio prepared a series of Abbott and Costello animated shorts, Bud received some money and supplied the voice for the cartoon Abbott.

In 1965 Universal attempted an anthology picture in the manner of Robert Youngson's popular comedy compilations for MGM and Twentieth Century Fox. *The World of Abbott and Costello* was excerpted from eighteen of the boys' Universal films and narrated by Jack E. Leonard. Since it didn't boast the all-star line-up that most of Youngson's films offered, it was not successful but has done repeated duty on some television stations—probably because it can be edited to any length with a minimum of difficulty. In some cities, like New York, it is shown practically every month; in Los Angeles it has yet to hit the television screens. Some cities use it as a filler while waiting for rain-halted sporting events to resume.

Abbott's last years were not good ones. Frequent illnesses put him in and out of the Motion Picture Country Home in Woodland Hills. At other times he lived with his adopted children nearby. During his last few years, interviewers who came to see him found Bud Abbott a pathetic figure, unable to remember much about the old days and sometimes unable to talk at all. Some of the articles written about him bordered on the sickly sentimental; others didn't bother, they just plunged right in on a portrait of a decrepit, forgotten pauper who had once been half of the hottest act in the movie business. He finally died on April 24, 1974.

Unlike some comedians who, in their declining years, were comforted by a new recognition of their work, Abbott was without such comfort. By way of hindsight, film historians have generally overlooked the works of Abbott and Costello, tending instead to concentrate on men who labored during the better times of the comedy film business. Still, the films of Abbott and Costello were undeniable entertainment and the burlesque routines they committed to celluloid will remain for future film fans to discover. The films have a special appeal to children. Said Costello on more than one occasion: "We always slanted our routines at kids. Kids are great imitators. They make heroes out of entertainers and imitate them." And Abbott added, "We always used a heavy broom on our material. Off-color stuff was completely out. If we couldn't be funny without stooping to blue jokes, we shouldn't have been in the business."

If there is an inner essence to the humor of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello it may well be contained within those two quotes. Costello always played the big, lovable baby—the oversized kid—and Abbott was the figure of authority—the adult who was not always sympathetic. In this respect they had something in common with their comedic betters—men like Charlie Chaplin, Harry Langdon, Laurel and Hardy, Harpo Marx and others whose characters mirrored some facet of youthful innocence and whose main concern was not whether the jokes were profound, but whether they were funny. *

Fanfare FORUM

● *You were expecting* Graphic Story Magazine *number 17?*

I almost expected it myself until one night about two years ago I came to realize—bony fingers haltingly poised over typewriter, bloodshot eyes aglow in dim flourescent light—that the old formula of interview/comics/letters was getting stale, frankly, and had become too rigid a format to comfortably continue working with. I was getting a little tired of its limitations. In recent issues, I tried to accomodate material other than comics: book illustration and radio (No. 16), movies (many issues), newspaper strips and yellow journalism tabloids of the 1920s-30s (No. 11 Will Gould issue), magazine cartoonists and science fiction writers (No. 15), and so on. Rather than keep on publishing a magazine supposedly centered around comics, leaning this way one issue and that way the next, I thought it was time to instead go with a new format that could legitimately include a wide range of subjects between the same covers. So, after much deliberation, Fanfare *was developed to take up where GSM left off—including comics, as always, while expanding to the popular arts in general. And in so doing, sharing increased editorial duties with co-producer Mark Evanier, who has similar interests in the same kind of magazine. The main reason GSM appeared infrequently toward the end was lack of spare time to properly devote to it. A more apt title would have been* Graphic Story Annual, *if not* Bi-Annual *in view of a whopping two years passing between the last issue and this one. With both of us acting as co-editors we hope to have* Fanfare *out at least twice a year, aiming for an ultimate goal of quarterly.*

Even with what might at first seem an abrupt change in format, Fanfare *has a great deal in common with* Graphic Story Magazine. *Some of the material in this and future issues was scheduled for GSM: the Al Feldstein interview, Russ Myers article, and all the reader correspondence here in Fanfare Forum—plus a number of other features already on file or in progress. While many things in* Fanfare *could never have fitted in GSM, everything that could go into GSM can also go into* Fanfare.

But I know some present subscribers still might not like Fanfare *when they thought they were ordering a comics-oriented magazine, so I make the offer of refunding remaining GSM subscription money to anyone who wants it. Just write and ask. I'll return the amount you have coming, this issue of* Fanfare *being on the house.*

If your subscription expires with this issue, and you like Fanfare's *format enough to renew on that basis, the ante, alas, will be a bit higher than it was with GSM. By its nature* Fanfare *should be a bigger magazine to cover its intended subject matter, and with it must come an increased price. If $2.00 a copy seems too much, with subscriptions at 4 for $8.00, there are two alternatives to changing the situation: 1) Cut back to 48 pages, lower the price to $1.50, and narrow the range of topics to what could sometimes be abbreviated form. This would not result in more issues per year, quarterly would still be tops, and in my opinion is not an easily accepted substitute. 2) Change the physical size to a 32-page tabloid newspaper format, get rid of expensive 4-color slick covers and book paper for interiors, eliminate bindery, and drop the price to $1.50 or $1.25 with little or no sacrifice in the amount of material per issue. This alternative is more acceptable to me, although many readers prefer slick format over newsprint tabloid and don't mind paying extra for it. Others might rather see fancy trimmings dropped in favor of a lower cost tabloid.*

I mention these alternatives as feelers to find out if there's a preference one way or the other, asking for feedback to determine how future issues will be planned. Write and let us know if you like Fanfare *just as it is or if you'd rather have a tabloid version. We'll go with majority rule.*

The following Fanfare Forum is made up of letters received in response to Graphic Story Magazine *No. 16, which featured "Wishing World," an EC comic book parody by Mark Evanier and John Pound; "Berserk Burk," a previously unpublished strip by Basil Wolverton; an article by and interview with Howard Nostrand, horror comics artist for Harvey Publications in the early 1950s, recently back in the fold with three issues of* Targitt *for the short-lived Atlas Seaboard line; "Routine," a wholly visual science fiction/fantasy strip by underground comix writer-artist George Metzger; and five pages of letters commenting on everything from* The New Yorker *to Dell's 1929* The Funnies *to flying saucers to various points in between.*

—Bill Spicer

Jim Harmon
Los Angeles, California

Thanks for the latest GSM. I receive exactly three free fanzines —yours, *Those Enduring Matinee Idols* (about movie serials) and *Riverside Quarterly,* a science fiction fanzine to which I contribute. I remember as a teenage sf fan I used to receive literally hundreds of fanzines free in the mail, just as samples, or for letters of comment, or simply because I was a Big Name Fan. Like a cop taking a free apple, I've always thought writers were entitled to a few special privileges, such as complimentary copies of books and magazines. The practice seems to be passing. Now in fandom, as everywhere else in America, it is only money that talks.

I collected old comics for a time, but I've stopped. In the past, a knowledge of the field, persistent hunting, etc.—i.e., work and study —could pay off. Now only money talks. The only way to get the old comics is to pay someone possessed of insatiable greed a large amount of money. It's no fun that way. I did buy a radio premium ring from Howard Rogofsky and he took two months to deliver it. Waiting that long took all the fun out of it. My message is, things are going to hell.

Tom Greeniones mentions the magic word "nostalgia"—magic to me since I've been making a living off of it for years. I agree that it is an escape from the unpleasant, perhaps the intolerable. I don't know how old Tom is, but he talks of the 1950s as nostalgia. What people now in their twenties or early thirties don't realize, or won't admit, is that my nostalgia is better than their nostalgia. People in their late thirties or over can go back to some things that had style or charm or at least a difference from the sameness of a world of endless, coast-to-coast Howard Johnsons. Most of the stuff of the 1950s was junk. Some of the stuff of the 1930s and '40s really was good.

People my age did start turning back to their childhood and finding that the *I Love A Mystery* radio series really did have charm and appeal, that *The Spirit* and *Captain Marvel* really were well done, that the art in the *Flash Gordon* Sunday page really was beautiful. I can see how those who grew up in the 1950s could be disillusioned. There were some good things—EC comics and *Kukla, Fran & Ollie* –but if they attempt to extract some kind of values out of plastic nothings like *Howdy Doody, Martin Kane, Private Eye* and *Superboy* comic books, they will fail.

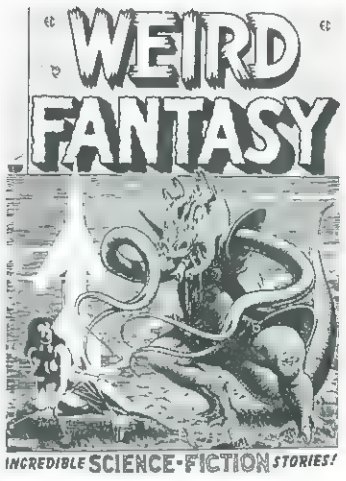
What about future nostalgia freaks? No doubt they will be nostalgic for *Magnum Force, Plop* and Tony Orlando & Dawn. When that day comes, nostalgia will lead not merely to escape but to a kind of death.

● *Your two examples of acceptable 1950s "nostalgia" seem closer to your own territory, Jim. Namely, the 1940s. EC's New Trend began in 1949 (their first horror story goes back to 1948) and for all practical purposes EC ran out of gas by 1954, a period more a part of the '40s in spirit than what most people think of today as the '50s, if one accepts the advent of rock & roll in 1955 as the decade's turning point. And* Kukla, Fran & Ollie, *after all, started on national tv in 1948.*

Your three examples of 1950s "plastic nothings" are also products of the '40s, even while they all ran well up into the '50s. Howdy Doody *began in 1947,* Martin Kane *and* Superboy *No. 1 both first appeared in 1949. (Superboy debuting in* More Fun Comics *in 1945.)*

I'm not passing judgment on any of these, just pointing out how they're not very accurate illustrations of what's supposedly good or bad about the '50s.

As for nostalgia elitism, one period being "better" than another, there must be true connoisseurs of the '50s who would be glad to repudiate this kind of indiscriminate bad-mouthing. Fanfare Forum is open to anyone who wants to reply, pro or con. —Bill



Mike Barrier
Alexandria, Virginia

I liked GSM No. 16 more than most of your recent issues, even though I have complaints about almost everything in it, taken individually. The important thing, though, is that what I've always thought of as "the GSM personality" has reasserted itself in this issue, with a mixture of material that reflects your concern with the comics as a distinct medium, rather than a vehicle for different kinds of fantasies.

Metzger is lovely, as always. I think George could be described as a *lyric* cartoonist, perhaps the only one of the breed. There are other underground cartoonists whose work has a poetic feeling—especially Bill Bergeron—but

George is the only one I can think of at the moment whose work ever has a singing quality. Looking at his current stuff, I can't help but remember that a few years ago I was clucking because his work lacked a certain polish. Thank goodness he never acquired it. Like a lot of other critics, I mistook the development of a distinctive style for a lack of technique. Now that George's style has matured, in stories like "Routine" and books like *Truckin',* I can see how fortunate it was that George didn't listen to me or anyone who was giving him similarly bad advice.

Hames Ware has made me aware, in conversations with him, of just how many really rotten people there were in comics back in the Forties, and Nostrand's interview certainly confirms that. It's good to have his testimony, but I was continuously aggravated by the manner of its presentation. Bhob Stewart may think it was "necessary to leave in many of Nostrand's digressions and sentence fragments," but he's wrong. The effect in print is not that of an "explosive speech pattern," but of a typographical jumble. He could in fact have conveyed that "explosive speech pattern," but only through careful editing, and not through a verbatim transcription. After all, a Nostrand tape is not the same as a Nixon tape; word-for-word accuracy isn't important—but the over-all effect is, and here the over-all effect too often verges on incoherence. I'm sure that's not the way Nostrand impressed Bhob, nor the way Bhob wanted to present him to us.

The footnotes are equally annoying, ranging as far afield as they do. This is "scholarly overkill," with a vengeance.

The larger problem I have with the interview is that it is difficult for me—on the basis of the evidence presented—to take Nostrand very seriously as an artist, whatever his merits as a man and a conscientious craftsman. Bhob's approach reminds me too much of those people who dissect B movies with great care and discernment, overlooking the important point that those movies, when considered as they were meant to be considered —as wholes—are terrible pieces of junk.

Bhob Stewart
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Since I misspelled Jackson Pollock's name, slipped in giving the date of Bernard Krigstein's debut one-man show (June 1-30, 1964) and neglected to annotate Chuck Cuidera's important role in the creation of *Blackhawk,* "scholarly overkill" is hardly an apt phrase. However, the parallel with B movies is exactly what I had in mind. To quote from critic Paul Schrader's *Notes on Film Noir:* ". . .Film noir was ideally suited to the low budget B film, and many of the best noir films were B films. . . Economic snobbery still lingers on in some critical circles: high-budget trash is considered more worthy of attention than low-budget trash . . . Film noir is more interested in style than theme, whereas American critics have been traditionally more interested in theme than style."

Eisner and Nostrand employed many of the B film's stylistic devices—waterfront scenes, low-key lighting, rain-glistening streets—to a point that their work is inextricably linked to and derivative of the film noir genre. Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation* and Andrew Sarris' *The American Cinema* are now recognized and established in their definitions of critical standards for dealing with the popular arts, and I quite consciously prepared the Nostrand interview in the wake of these books. Nostrand can't be dismissed any more than can those hundreds of B movies. I'm somewhat bemused that the world's leading commentator and critic of duck art has made such a charge.

● *Of course the term "B movie" itself can be misleading before anything else is said about actual films. Originally the term just meant Low Budget, with no inherent suggestion of "good" or "bad." D. W. Griffith made Bs for years before and after* Birth of a Nation *and* Intolerance. Dumbo *could be classed as a B picture by Disney standards of the period, made by "A" personnel for a much lower cost following blockbusters like* Snow White, Pinocchio *and* Fantasia *where no expense was spared. Yet some Disney aficionados consider* Dumbo *the studio's best cartoon feature.*

B movies as commonly defined —Tex Ritter westerns, Dead End Kids, Charlie Chan, World War II Ann Miller musicals, serials, some noirs, etc.—seem to have produced four basic categories of critique:
1. Seasoned B movie fans who like them and make no apologies.
2. Scholarly intellectuals playing the mental exercise game of finding cosmic significance.
3. Slumming academics condescending to bestow a few good words, alternately damning with faint praise and sticking in the shiv.
4. Those of us among the enlightened hierarchy who fully perceive the true B movie aesthetic in all its forms, an exalted level of critique many strive for and few attain.

Dumbhead B movie criticism of the sort Mike mentions has its counterpart in so-called serious film journals when you consider the reams of inanities written about fashionable auteur directors —the flip side of "scholarly overkill," with its own kind of vengeance. —Bill

Christian Walbo
Pinneberger, West Germany

I always considered myself an expert on American comic books —as far as a European can say so— but the letter of Hames Ware made me "look old" as we'd say around here. Why did he have to slap my face right in the beginning?! I always read the letter column first, but that will teach me.

Anyway, this was one of the few occasions I read a magazine from beginning to end in one session. I used to wait several days to continue through a magazine, I read one or two stories then wait, comes the next day, comes the next story, and so on. But this time it was different: while looking through GSM No. 16 to find the most interesting article to start with I was caught. I couldn't help but glance at the first two graphic stories and then right away swallow the article by Howard Nostrand and the interview. Never before have I been carried away that much as with this issue on American graphic stories!

But that's not all. Just after having finished reading I was out to watch a film on tv, *The Little Foxes* by William Wyler (1941)— one of the best films I ever saw, and I've seen quite a number. The combination of the two really blew my mind! I was kind of "high." Although I've never been on drugs I suppose it's much the same to what I feel now while writing this letter—it's like taking a hot bath (about 45-50° C). Excuse the crude example, but it fits, at least for me, to lay back and wait until you're totally relaxed, almost asleep—you float in the air, you're free, if only for a few minutes or hours—until daily life gets you again (why can't we forget this!!)

What I wanted to say was that I'd like to introduce you to an idea that came to my mind minutes ago after seeing this excellent film.

Couldn't you present an interesting graphic story and two controversial analyses on this piece of "art." Come to think of it, it isn't all that easy. Let two examples speak for themselves. The first is a story done by Kirby in one of the DC books: back in the bad old days a barbaric tribe tries to overcome their technologically skilled rulers, the young chief destroys the center of their laboratories, though it causes the continent (South America?) to explode. Now it would be Kirby's task to explain whose side he's on—one possibility. The other example I think of is Ditko's "Mr. A" or his "The Question" who would surely arise controversial comments. How about this? Think of it.

Another reason I mentioned the film is this: *The Little Foxes* originally was a play, but after having seen it as a film I couldn't quite believe this has ever been successful on stage. This transformation of a good play into an even better film leads to the question "has this ever been done with comics?" This is pretty much the same as Robert E. Butts suggested in his GSM 16 letter, point 3. Wouldn't this be an aspect to take into consideration in coming GSMs?

● *I can tell you precisely the meaning of the Kirby story you refer to, "Toxl the World-Killer" in* Weird Mystery Tales *No. 2. It doesn't mean a damn thing. The meaning of it was supposed to be that technology for the sake of technology is not progress; that it can, in fact, denote regression. That's what the story started out to say but, between inception and publication, it became hopelessly jumbled due to a lack of understanding between writer, artist and publisher—one of those classic object lessons in how* not *to do a comic book. And Jack Kirby didn't write it. I did, imitating his style. —Mark Evanier*

● Fanfare *commentary on Jack Kirby is a possibility if enough readers want it, though it seems to me his recent work has already been examined in depth elsewhere, if not done to death, especially* The New Gods. *Ditko's "Mr. A" and "The Question" have also received detailed coverage. But something might come of this should we get any submissions on the subject.*

My own reaction to "Mr. A" as a propaganda vehicle is that Ditko, in his aim to deliver an uncompromising message, blunts his purpose nearly every time by refusing to entertain the audience he most needs to reach. He violates fundamental story-telling principles in favor of force-feeding dogma. This approach only turns away more potential converts than it gathers into the flock. I can't imagine anyone being won over to his philosophy who isn't 90% there already. The persuasive propagandist working in the graphic story medium

will always develop and transmit his ideas through convincing story situations and characters, as three of the masters—Will Eisner, Carl Barks and Harvey Kurtzman—showed in some of their best works.

Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes, *with Tallulah Bankhead in the stage role later done by Bette Davis in the 1941 movie, opened at the National Theatre in New York on February 15, 1939, and ran a very successful 410 performances until it closed on February 3, 1940. The prestigious Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play of 1939 ended in a No Decision four-way deadlock, the vote split between* The Little Foxes, *Robert Sherwood's* Abe Lincoln in Illinois, *Clifford Odets'* Rocket to the Moon *and William Saroyan's* My Heart's in the Highlands.

Adapting stage plays to comics would be subject to the same pitfalls seen in many film adaptations and then some. A graphic novel treatment of The Little Foxes, *say, faces the problem of asking an artist to draw hundreds of visually static dialog scenes and keep reader interest from flagging—closely tied to the greater task of establishing a graphic story equivalent of characters with the compelling physical presence of an actor, in this case a Tallulah Bankhead or a Bette Davis, no small measure of any play or play-into-movie's success.*

But some stage plays do suggest themselves for adaptation by certain comic artists. Herewith, for the fun of it, a few long-shot possibilities to consider: Jules Feiffer's Little Murders *by Will Eisner, Tennessee Williams'* Night of the Iguana *by Frank Frazetta, Neil Simon's* The Odd Couple *by Jack Davis, Arthur Miller's* Death of a Salesman *by Bernard Krigstein, Thornton Wilder's* Our Town *by Carmine Infantino, Shakespeare's* Macbeth *by Wally Wood, George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's* The Man Who Came To Dinner *by Mike Sekowsky, Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan's* Mister Roberts *by Alex Toth, and, stretching the definition of stage play just enough to make one barf up one's Twinkies, the long-running Paris* Grand Guignol *by Graham Ingels.*

Anyone with additions or improvements on the above? —Bill

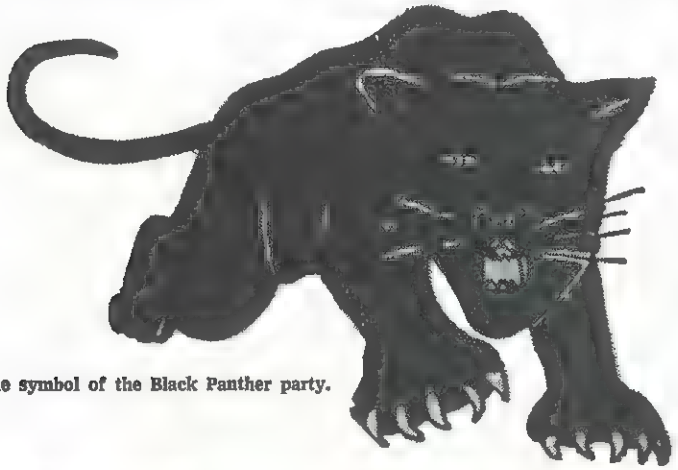
Kenneth Smith
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

GSM No. 16 was a true bonanza. Berserk Burk was nothing short of zany genius, and the other contents well above average, but it was the material on Howard Nostrand that was most captivating. I too have long been curious about that fine little "8:30 P.M." and other of his contributions to Harvey Comics, and I want to express heartfelt thanks to you for clearing this mystery up. Nostrand's frank and bitter comments on the comics industry gave a much truer picture than one tends to find in published remarks from comic artists who, still being in the employ of these feudal barons, have to hedge their comments.

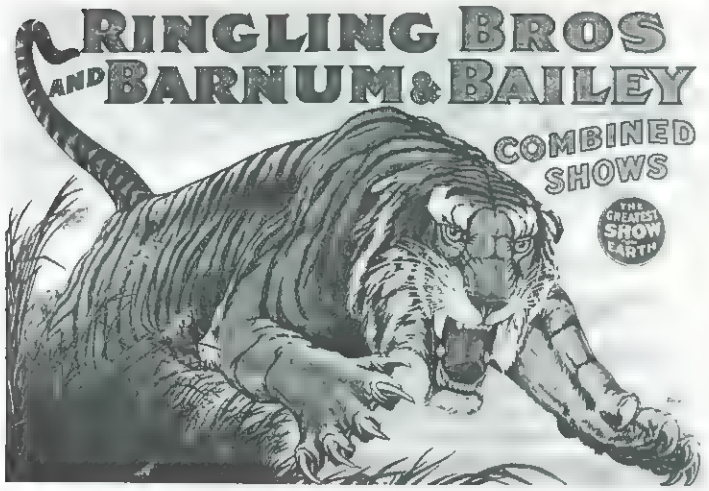
One afterthought to the interview with Nostrand: I wondered why one of his most widely publicized pieces of work went unremarked. Surely Nostrand himself must have noticed that the leopard he drew for the cover of *Adventures in 3D* No. 1 (1953) enjoyed renewed life in 1960s politics, apparently copied and inked-in solid as the symbol of the Black Panther Party. The variations from the Harvey cover to the Black Panther Party drawing (curve of the tail, cruder curves on the musculature, neglect of the portion of the torso seen between the right forearm and the jaw) are not so considerable as to undo the overall similarity in posture, particularly the unusual angles at which the two forepaws relate to one another.

The Ringling Brothers poster, to me, displays merely a common theme and not necessarily any evidence of derivation or influence: the extreme difficulty of foreshortening (so dramatic and harmonious on the comics cover) is hardly present at all on the circus poster, and no portion of the cat's anatomy is really similar from the Harvey drawing to the Ringling poster, not even the nose or lower lip. Of course, there may be a much more relevant version of the circus poster from the years prior to publication of the 3D comic.

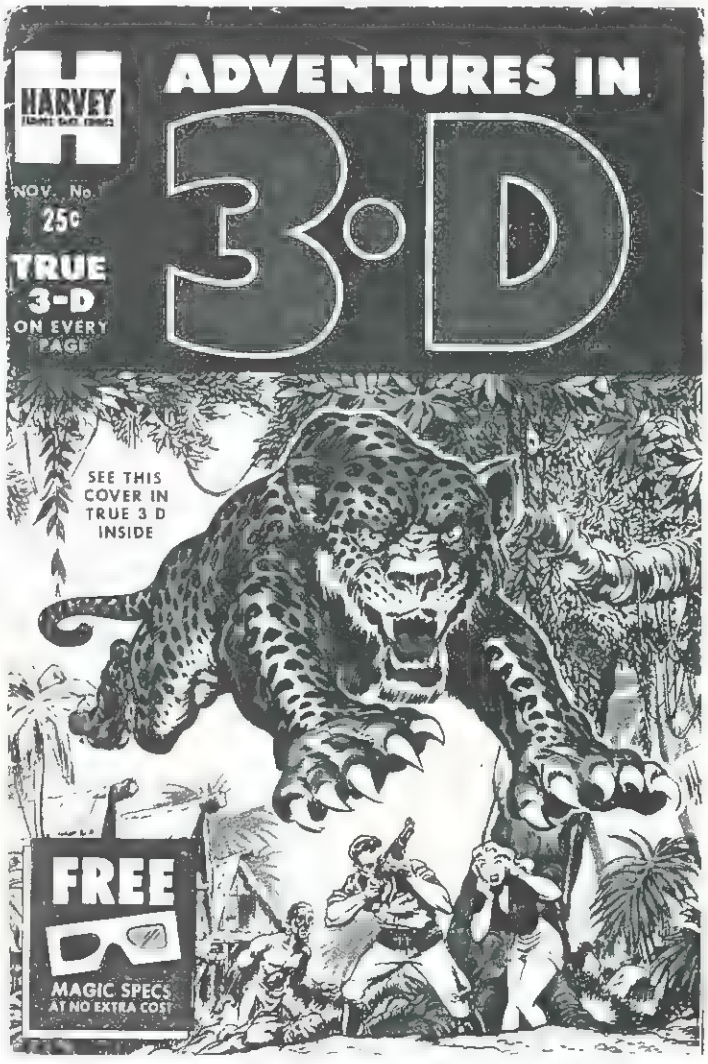
● *The charging tiger pose goes back at least as far as the classic 1923 circus poster reproduced here, probably with direct antecedents and variations traceable to 19th century posters and canvasses. The basic 1923 artwork has been in continual use by Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey, alternating between tiger stripes and leopard spots in modified full-figure and cropped versions; it can still be*



The symbol of the Black Panther party.



1923 circus poster. Photo courtesy of Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.



Cover art by Howard Nostrand, 1953 © Harvey Publications

seen today on circus posters and billboards, though over the years the original art has been redrawn several times to accomodate reproduction processes from full-color litho to 2-color silk screen and black & white.

Nostrand says his Adventures in 3D *source was a flopped and otherwise modified pose taken from a magazine ad for Canadian Club scotch whiskey—a long lost ad from the early '50s we couldn't locate to include with this cat gallery. The Black Panthers do seem to have adapted the 3D cover for their own use in the '60s, except, as Ken notes, it's also possible the panther could have been lifted from some other example of circus art. In Dali's painting the original source is purposely duplicated and used intact. —Bill*

Jerry De Fuccio
MAD Magazine, New York

GSM No. 16 is being absorbed at odd moments here, and while scanning Mark Evanier's misgivings about "a story a day by Feldstein" I hurriedly questioned Al on the matter as he passed by my open door.

Al wrote a story a day, Monday through Thursday, and Friday was devoted to the letters page and house ads.

Is that Gospel, definitive, real McCoy, fair dinkum, stack of Bibles, unimpeachable source verity?

Al also acknowledges that Jack Mendelsohn wrote for *Panic*. Perhaps Frank Jacobs in his *Mad World* book would have been more precise if he stated that Al Feldstein was the natural choice because Bill Gaines was only too happy to re-employ him after Harvey's departure. Al was a great talent "at liberty" at the time.

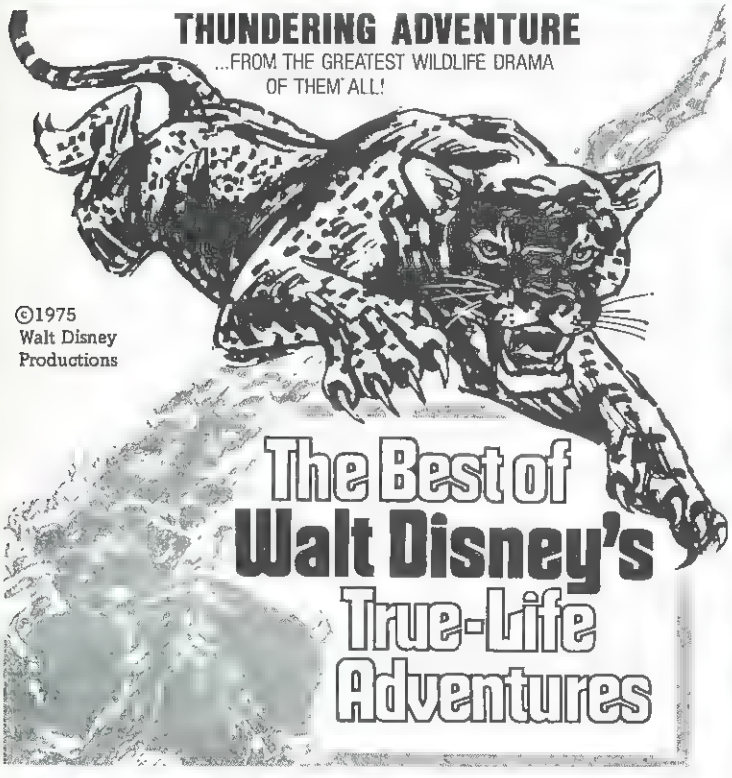
"Trial By Arms," which Howard Nostrand brutalized, was written by me for *Two-Fisted Tales* No. 34. Harvey had yellow jaundice at the time. I also did the French Foreign Legion story, "En Crapaudine," for John Severin in issue No. 34. John drew it in my Aunt Mary's parlor, while he was wooing Michelina De Fuccio. Nice memories. I wish I could write "as well" as I did in those days.

As for Graham Ingels, Nostrand's patronizing remark that he was snuffed out with the demise of horror isn't the whole story. Graham would deliver his work rather late at EC in 1951-52 when I started there. Everyone was gone for the day and Graham and myself would have a cuticle of scotch in dixie cups. I knew where Bill Gaines kept the liquor that was left over from the Christmas party. Bill knew I knew where he kept the liquor. Graham would sit—and sip—and admonish me that the comics were an ignoble business. He had been an editor for Ned Pines. Along with his good friend, Rafael Astarita, Graham was obliged to touch up a large quantity of very bad art which publisher Pines had bought very cheaply from "artist" Ken Battefield. I know how demeaning that must have been, as I couldn't tolerate Battefield's presence in a comic book when I was a paying customer.

Graham had sufficient verve at Fiction House and it *is* evident in his *Sea Devil* originals which I own. I suggest he was demoralized at Standard Publications and by Ned Pines.

Fortunately for me, I never found out how "ignoble" the comics biz was because I've worked

Salvadore Dali, 1944. "One second before awakening from a dream by the flight of a bee around a pomegranate."


THUNDERING ADVENTURE
...FROM THE GREATEST WILDLIFE DRAMA OF THEM ALL!
©1975 Walt Disney Productions
The Best of Walt Disney's True-Life Adventures

Cover drawn by Gil Kane

© Marvel Comics

for Bill Gaines.

● *My questioning that Al Feldstein wrote "a story a day" bordered on heterodoxy to some EC fans who don't seem to care that it doesn't add up. I'm glad to see that the legend has now been revised downward from "a story a day" to "Monday through Thursday." Even at that, Feldstein would have to take something like ten weeks vacation per year, not to have scripts left over after filling all his magazines.*

Actually, "a story a day" is no great feat. Almost any comic book writer could do that; many of them have to, pay rates being what they are. What was exceptional about Feldstein's comic book work was his quality, not his speed. —Mark

Landon Chesney
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Hearing of an interview with some artist on the Harvey staff who we had all mistook for Jack Davis in the 1950s, I snarfed quietly in my beer, knowing full well I'd scanned EC's competition well enough—mostly for laughs—to know that no one on Harvey's payroll could be remotely confused with Davis. As it turns out, Nostrand, if the mood was on him, could be confused with virtually *any*one on the EC staff. Really amazing work. So much so, in fact, that the big question, as in the cases of Basil Wolverton and Russ Heath, begs answering. Why didn't they work for EC? Nostrand, to my knowledge, is the only one of the three who's had the question put to him directly. His answer seemed vague, to say the least. His Wood parody (somehow "parody" is lacking semantically) is a genuine tour de force. He not only caught the superficial quirks of Wood's style, which has been done often enough, but the actual spirit of it —certainly much more so than either Sid Check or Joe Orlando, Wood's so-called proteges. Even more staggering is the takeoff on Kurtzman, whom Nostrand professes to dislike. I keep asking myself if I would have been fooled, not knowing in advance that the material was by Nostrand. I think it's a fair bet that coming on these stories unaware I would have taken either for the original.

Nostrand's block on Kurtzman I still can't figure out or even rationalize. His slant on everything else dictates the contrary. Kurtzman is an artist's artist. It takes an artist, or a fan with a strong sense of artistic sensibilities, to appreciate that his stuff, which often goes beyond the ordinary license of comic book impressionism, is still "true" and very much in the classic comic book tradition. Kurtzman uses a kind of cartooning shorthand—which I understand would put off or even antagonize the layman, the casual comic reader—but it is particularly troubling in Nostrand's case because while he is not a layman his objections are stated in those purely superficial terms. It takes an artist, and not a strict realist, to appreciate that the spirit of Kurtzman's loose depictions of weaponry, for instance, was sometimes truer than the most uncompromisingly accurate drawing. Especially if the weapon is firing. Kurtzman would draw the gun in terms of its kinetic energy, which for his purposes was truer than the way it would look if you just copied it sitting on a table and then drew flames spewing from the barrel. It's these little touches that you would logically expect Nostrand as a pro, and particularly as an EC fan, to appreciate.

As to the interview itself, it was interesting, but not engaging. Not in the same sense that the interviews with Bernard Krigstein and Alex Toth were about as near perfect as you could hope for. I think, in Krigstein's case, he was only casually involved with the comics and he felt no inhibitions about discussing his work as art, whether it was a painting or if it happened to wind up on a comic page. Toth must have a fannish orientation, an acquaintance with comics fandom, that paralleled his development as a professional.

The interviews with Wolverton, Nostrand and John Severin all seemed to share an underlying sense of uncertainty; they seemed to be on the verge of discussing their influences and their opinions, but never quite letting themselves go. It's like Hitchcock discussing the suspense film in terms of distribution problems. The classic instance, and the one where I felt most frustrated, was Severin's answer to the question about how film influenced his work. Obviously it influenced his work a great deal; he shares with Kurtzman a very definite sense of pacing and structure. "Pigs of the Roman Empire" *(Two Fisted Tales* No. 21), for instance, is doubly impressive not only in its understated but extremely effective pacing, but that those few pages told you more about Rome and the arrogance of its aristocracy than any of the considerable number of films that Hollywood has produced on the subject. I don't know if it's true—any truer than *Quo Vadis*—but it was a very persuasive and thoroughly satisfying narrative. In short, I was persuaded by this story in a way that a movie has never persuaded me.

Then there is the Tubridy series, Korda films on paper, with the barracks-room camaraderie of Ford or Hawks thrown in for good measure. And it works. Severin made it work, the same cadence of the films in comic book form.

All of which is by way of noting that Severin had a great deal to say on film—and of a lot more pertinence than hordes of people who have actually directed a film—and all we got from the interview was that Severin would like to direct a film and that he liked *Gunga Din,* which he qualified by categorizing as "that dumb thing." I recall this statement eliciting a surprised response from the interviewer, John Benson, as it did from me. What this suggests is an almost insurmountable problem in orientation. While it is not a "serious" film—it is the adventure film par excellence, a masterfully conceived and executed entertainment—it could be discussed without fear of making one's self a laughing stock. It's on this point that the orientation problem enters. You and I have had 20 or so years of orientation to the fannish outlook, while the working professional of the '40s and '50s has only lately been introduced to the idea of fandom as an organized, cohesive whole. It's very likely that Wolverton, for instance, never received a fan letter during the most active period of his professional working life. And that the general editorial consensus of his work was that it was "noncommercial." In short, these men probably feel more defensive about their stuff than anything else, and it's hard to really persuade themselves that there are legions of us who admire and appreciate their work.

Maybe the Toth interview should be required reading; it's a point of common ground that most any professional could relate to. If they can see that Toth can discuss his work and comics on a completely serious plane, without the self-deprecating gags, then perhaps they can also.

That it was as late as 1953 before something like Bhob Stewart's *EC Fan Bulletin* materialized is a pretty good indication of the social climate in which comics have existed for most of their history. There are certain qualifications. Generally it was permissable to discuss a syndicated strip halfway seriously, particularly *Terry and the Pirates* and *Li'l Abner.* These were accepted in a sort of "grown up" way. But even at that an article about syndicated strips was a novelty in the '40s. And even today you're not going to find, in a general type magazine or newspaper, anything about Carl Barks, John Stanley, or C. C. Beck. The social historian, having nothing to rely on but popular periodicals of the '40s and '50s, would have forced on him the conclusion that a) Al Capp was the single cartoonist who had elevated the comic strip to the level of satire and b) comic books, a bastard offshoot of the prestigious newspaper daily strip, had absolutely nothing to recommend them except as a diversion for children. I don't think it was any accident that Frederic Wertham found them either harmless drivel or dangerously suggestive. He wasn't conditioned to accept Barks, Stanley or Beck, even if he happened to come across them. The form itself has been too long in disrepute. Most fans accuse Wertham of deliberately slanting his book, *Seduction of the Innocent.* I don't think this was the case. As the typical adult of his time I don't think he could have written it any other way. I've heard that comic books were mentioned in passing in certain science fiction fanzines of the '40s and '50s, but it's hard to believe that much of an issue was made of them. Again, because of the social climate, science fiction fans were in enough hot water with their dreadful pulp literature; they didn't need the additional burden of being singled out as grownups who still read funny books. There was a strong prejudice against comics among science fiction fans, as late as the early '60s, as there was in the general adult population. Witness all the static Richard Lupoff incurred when *All In Color For A Dime* first appeared in his early '60s fan magazine *Xero.*

Anyway, putting it all in the context of the period, it seems as if these comic artists are reacting to the attitudes of 20 and 30 years ago. And once getting locked into a frame of reference of that kind it's damned hard to shake loose. Particularly since conditioning of this kind is often the kind you're least aware of—and all the stronger for it.

Take drinking as an example. I'm only guessing here, but I think the generation that Severin and Eisner belong to would find it harder to decline a drink than you or I would. This mandatory aspect of "having a good time" was noticeably strong in the Will Gould interview. There was a tremendous pride factor in Gould's conveying the idea that he stayed shellacked about 80% of the time. I don't have any idea if he really did, but he came from a period that set great store by such things. And he couldn't have told his story in any

other way. That was his way of "apologizing" for being a comics artist; it was okay because it bought a lot of booze, broads and good times. But he couldn't justify it by itself.

● *The day will probably come when someone somewhere will do the definitive study of the species. I don't mean the kind of heavy-handed character study promulgated by would-be Arthur Millers, etching out their suffering characters in terms of having to sell newspapers at age twelve. I'm referring to the whole concept of the Work Ethic; of penuriousness versus the Enjoyment of Now. I once had a friend, back when I plodded through the sixth grade, who was going to be a doctor. This was not a decision he had come to. It was one that was made for him, long before he was even conceived. His father was a doctor and of the opinion that the only honorable occupation in the world was being a doctor. All humanity could be roughly divided into two castes: Doctors and Scum. (Dentists were not classed with Scum—they were looked on more or less as failed doctors.) Being a lawyer or an inventor or an honest cop or President or Pope all had about equal prestige to this Doctor with being, say, a child molester or an itinerent wino. He explained why, one day, after I had let slip the horrendous news that I wanted to be a writer. "A medical writer, I trust," my friend's father actually said to me. When I said no, he took me aside and told me how, during the Great Depression, he had sweated at something like eleven jobs a day, eighty-two days a week, at four cents an hour to earn his Med School diploma. That in hand, he had set up his practice and survived the worst financial days. "Even when the country's in bad shape, people get sick," I recall him saying. And the next half-hour was filled with braggadocio about how, since the day the stock market did its fateful nosedive, he had done nothing but work, work, work—day in, day out. And when I asked what he did for fun, he said, "Drink! I used to get drunk every night!" The way he said it, it sounded more to me like retreat. Anyway, that's why I think so many in that age bracket equate drink with "a good time" and that's why my old school chum is now an Intern, working for his degree. It was either that or be disowned.*

In all my years of reading comic books—and, more recently, writing them—the only out-and-out slurs I have ever heard cast on the form came from science fiction fans. And those contumelies usually echoed the unenlightened rantings that supposed intellectuals cast at science fiction. I call it Infectious Bigotry and my guess is that it comes about because, in their zeal for what they consider scholarly recognition, some sf fans think they must keep the idea that sf is for adults, unlike comic books and, more recently, Star Trek. It's stupid, of course. Most of these people wouldn't know "scholarly recognition" if it came up and place-kicked them in the groin. —Mark

● *Back issues of* Graphic Story Magazine *featuring interviews with Alex Toth, Basil Wolverton, Will Gould and John Severin are sold out, in case Landon's comments have inspired any new readers to order. So please suppress the impulse to send that order. The Nostrand issue, No. 16, is the only one still available in a limited quantity at $2.00 per copy.*

The Bernard Krigstein interview in Jerry Weist & John Benson's Squa Tront *No. 6 can be had for $3.00 from Jerry Weist at the Million Year Picnic, 18 Elliott Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. This is an* all-*Krigstein issue, highly recommended to serious fans and students of the comic art medium. Back issues, covering all aspects of EC comics, are available from Jerry at $3.00 each, except for No. 4 (an elaborate 84-pager with double front and back covers) which is $5.00. —Bill*

SPECIAL ISSUE: BERNARD KRIGSTEIN

Hames Ware
Somewhere in Arkansas

Life is change, and though we'll all miss *Graphic Story Magazine* I am looking forward, with you, to *Fanfare* and all the new and exciting things its appearance heralds.

In saying so long to GSM I read back over each issue and found them extremely re-readable and informative. I wish I could say the same thing for my own letters to the editor. My only consolation is that some maturity of thought and style does take place over the years.

I wonder if I might enter the letter column of your first issue of *Fanfare* by tying up some of the myriad loose ends I left behind in some of those old GSM letter columns. . .

These thoughts on Roy Thomas comic book work are about 5 years overdue. Because I have been so involved in researching past workers of the comics for *The Who's Who of Comic Books* I just never paid much attention to the present day comics and specifically the many fine things Roy's been responsible for directly or indirectly. But I've finally caught up with the present and I know the same words I wrote about Wendell Crowley can be said of Roy Thomas—he *cares* about his work. If Jerry Bails and I didn't feel a lot of good work was being done by Roy and other contemporaries we would've never undertaken extending the cut-off date for entries of the *Who's Who* to include everyone right up to the day of printing. Roy Thomas is a big reason we did this—he and all the others who care about the medium and their work in it.

It appears I was over-zealous in championing interviews with women cartoonists by including the name "Cecelia Munson" among those pioneers. Cecelia Munson, it turns out, may not be any more than one of the innumerable pseudonyms used by Munson Paddock, who goes back to the beginning of original art comics (having drawn "The Blood Pearls" and other features in the '30s for Wheeler-Nicholson) and appears to have closed out his/her cryptic career at Fawcett doing some of the best *Ibis* features in the middle '40s. Paddock bears strong resemblance to the equally mysterious "Bing" at Dell, and may have inked Bud Thompson on the best of his Captain Marvel Jrs.

Charles Nicholas, it turns out, did do Blue Beetle and many other golden age features under the C. Wojtkoski signature—this from S. M. Iger who has kindly delved into his shop's history for Jerry and the *Who's Who*. Charles Cuidera did not do Blue Beetle, and thus ends that confusion.

Classics Illustrated art enthusiasts may be interested in this new data I uncovered in preparing an art credits list for Jim Sands' *Classics* fan magazine. (Similar work done earlier for another fan magazine recently appears sans any credit for my work.) Walter Palais completed Rudy Palais' *Rob Roy*, Ann Brewster worked on *Mr. Midshipman Easy* with Bill Walsh, it looks like, and other Iger artists. The unknown story in *Gold Bug* may be Jim Lavery who also did an issue for *Famous Authors*, the *Classics* imitator. And I believe Alex Blum's son-in-law Bill Bossert might have worked on *The Jungle Book*, that Dan Zolnerowich and Blum re-drew *Man in the Iron Mask*, that Gustav Schrotter and Lawrence Dresser collaborated on *Men of Iron* and that *The Dark Frigate* was done by one or two of R. H. Webb's long-time inkers, David Heames or Ed Waldman.

Desert Gold at Dell is still in doubt, and having tried Dan Noonan and Morris Gollub's memory on the unknown *Fairy Tale Parade* artist and failing, it appears it will remain unknown. I hate to give up, as the art is so beautifully done, but with Walt Kelly, Arthur Jameson, Jon Small, George Kerr, plus editor/art director Oscar Lebeck dead, there's no one else to go to. The only faint hope left for indentification is that the work was that of a moonlighting animator, and that some fellow animator may recognize this most distinctive art.

I wish you'd ask Harry Harrison —who edited the Premier line of comics, short-lived in the '50s—who the devil "Al Gordon" was. At Marvel the stories this moniker appeared on at times resembles Joe Kubert, yet elsewhere Al Gordon art looks nothing like Kubert —more like Bob McCarty at Premier. For that matter we're still not sure if McCarty is a real name.

Jim Vadeboncoeur is researching Al Gordon, Bob McCarty/McCarthy, and also the third artist in what seems an inter-related similarity of styles or inspirations. This third artist we refer to as "B. B. Jr." as he handled the "Buffalo Bill Jr." series at Dell. Jim and Ron Harris have found original panels from Alex Raymond and John Prentice for virtually every panel rendered by B. B. Jr. His identity may always be in doubt, but his source material is clear.

Lest it seem like unknowns have all stayed unknown, here are a number of solved mysteries since my last letter. . .

Jim Steranko, true to his word, tracked down the name of "The Black Dwarf" artist. His name was Paul Gatuso, and he also worked at Prize, as did "F.M." whom Jerry Bails found to be Fred Morgan, a former newspaper comic strip artist. Ron Goulart has certainly aided the *Who's Who* with his knowledge of strip artists who crossed over into comic books. If we could only find someone to serve the same function with pulp crossovers—particularly for the St. John and Ziff-Davis pulp men who didn't sign their comic book work. "Wild Boy" looks like Harve Stein a bit. But who did "Jan of the Jungle" at Fiction House in *Rangers* No. 42-63? Was Leo Summers working in comics that early?

S. M. Iger assured Jerry DeFuccio that Steve Broder was the real name of the artist on "Kinks Mason" and that Ed Laughlin was "Dennis Colebrook." With Jerry's help I finally was able to confirm

a long held feeling that Ernie Schroeder was the artist who finished out The Heap and Airboy for Hillman and did the *Capt. Davy Jones* one-shot at Dell. Dr. Gordon Green discovered Marge of *Little Lulu* fame doing original text illos in David McKay comic books of the 1930s.

Identifying art is great fun, but hard work. Perhaps you will consider a regular *Fanfare* feature on comic book art mysteries and identification for cartoon art fans who share that interest.

Over the year, mostly in the letter columns of your magazine, I've asked for help in removing the shroud of mystery from the first Andy Panda artist at Dell who signed once and only once the cryptic single name or nickname "Bing," in *New Funnies* No. 63, 1942. Unlike many other queries, no answers came forth on this. And so, attributing that to a lack of interest on the part of most fans in the funny animal art credits, I decided Bing would have to remain in the comic ether. But now the search can be expanded to include the previously-uninvolved hero comic and Timely partisans. Getting my first look at Timely's *Daring Comics* No. 6, 1940, lo and behold—unsigned but unmistakable, doing "The Falcon," is none other than Bing. Now maybe someone can at last solve the mystery. I would personally like to hear from anyone with clues. (c/o *Fanfare* magazine.)

I'd also be glad to hear from others who enjoy working up art checklists on their comics. This type of collaborative effort could be mutually beneficial both to the *Who's Who* data search and to the individual comic owner who seeks to know who did the work in their comics. An even more beneficial result could be the substantiation of an artist's presence or lack of presence in particular issues or runs of titles.

As a case in point, like many others I've always assumed most Blackhawks at Quality were drawn by Reed Crandall. I recently saw a complete run of *Blackhawk,* along with getting a request for help in identifying the art, particularly just how much Crandall art was in them. Wittingly or unwittingly, many issues of the title are sold to collectors as containing Crandall work. But, after looking through these books, it's obvious they contain less Crandall than most have assumed. True, there is a Crandall look to much of the non-Crandall art, but that's consistent with the Raboy look, Kirby look, Lou Fine look, etc., that continued after the original artist was gone or too busy to keep up with the workload. Naturally it was in the publisher's best interest to fill in or replace the innovators with emulators to continue the style established by the creator. The best Blackhawks *are* by Crandall. Usually when there's a question as to whether Reed did a story or not, he didn't. There are at least two artists producing a Reed Crandall look in the later Blackhawks. One may well be Dick Rockwell, the other possibly John Cassone. It seems Cuidera appears erratically until 1950 when the collaboration with Dick Dillin begins. Along with Cuidera other inkers are E. H. Hart (most of the Bill Wards), John Forte (who also does several solo stories) and the aforementioned Nicholas, who does solo work as well. Bill Ward is responsible for many of the sexy ladies in later *Blackhawk,* and Paul Gustavson, besides doing most of the Chop-Chop fillers, does a couple of Blackhawks. Even Gene Colan pops up in a couple of issues, circa 1950. I don't know what postwar Dan Zolnerowich looks like, but he's probably in these books, as are John Spranger and/or Alex Kotzky—the same two artists responsible for some of the best *Spirit* and *Plastic Man* work. Like Crandall's scarcity in *Blackhawk,* Jack Cole is missing from many *Plastic Man* issues. It would be nice to have some knowledgeable help in trying to separate Cassone, Spranger, Kotzky and postwar Zolnerowich work on the lead character titles they worked on at Quality.

Volume III of the *Who's Who* art examples contains some unavoidable errors also. I saw the art examples for the first time after the book was published. Jerry had to rush them to the printer, so instead of Howard Larsen on "Lost World" it's Graham Ingels. The Crandall page is a collaboration at best, with Cassone, Palais or Ward involved, most likely. Ditto the Raboy *Captain Marvel Jr.,* probably done with Emil Gershwin. The Al Carreno *Ibis* is probably Nat Champlin.

Volume IV of the *Who's Who* will correct these, and include a multitude of other additions and corrections to Volumes I and II. All serious fans can help the cause by sending to Jerry Bails all omissions, additions and other data. Volume IV should be a blockbuster, with shop staff lists and other special features. Jerry Bails, 487 Lakewood Blvd., Detroit, Michigan 48215.

● *More and more, comic book fans are growing less interested with the characters ("Who's stronger, the Thing or the Hulk?") and more concerned with the creators. Still, I (Mark) am personally amazed at how naive so many fans are when it comes to identifying artists—especially in the original art market. I have seen Dick Giordano passed off as Neal Adams and vice-versa, and Gil Kane/Tom Palmer art incorrectly identified as both. I once encountered a fan at a convention who was delighted with his newly-purchased Ditko original (he loved Ditko's art) until I told him it was by Joe Kubert (he couldn't stand Kubert). Some of this stems from published credits that are often incomplete or inaccurate—assuming there are published credits. The fact that credits are now considered standard features on most comics is due wholly to the rise of comic book fandom and the desire by fans to learn more about the craft.*

But then that's what fandom, comic book or otherwise, is all about—involvement with the form that transcends mere consumerism. An art form only becomes an art form when it has art patrons. It is to this end, patronage of the popular arts, that Fanfare *is devoted.*

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COMMANCHE STATION (1960) Randolph Scott. Man searching for his wife, kidnapped by the Commanche, guides another woman through hostile territory. MM-5013-C-$49.95

GENGHIS KAHN (1965) Omar Sharif, Telly Savalas, James Mason, Eli Wallach, Stephen Boyd, Robert Morley. Adventures of one of history's greatest warriors, once a Mongol slave and eventually head of an army sweeping victoriously through Asia. MM-5027-C-$49.95

JOLSON STORY, THE (1946) Larry Parks, Evelyn Keyes, William Demerest. Tuneful delight, with the famed Jolson on the sound track of this Oscar-winning story of the brash performer's rise to fame. Larry Parks stars as Jolson. MM-5008-C-$49.95

LADY FROM SHANGHAI, THE (1948) Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth. Orson Welles' bizarre thriller. A husband suspects his wife of having an affair with an adventurer—and frames her for murder. MM-1027-B/W-$39.95

LOST COMMAND (1966) Anthony Quinn, Alain Delon, George Segal, Claudia Cardinale. Action-packed story of guerilla warfare in Algeria. Quinn, of French peasant stock, becomes an officer commanding the anti-terrorist forces. MM-5032-C-$49.95

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IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT (1934) Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert. Oscar-winning screwball comedy: a runaway heiress falls for reporter on a rural bus trip and begs him to shield her from her father s agents. MM-1016-B/W-$39.95

ON THE WATERFRONT (1954) Marlon Brando, Eva-Marie Saint, Karl Malden, Lee J. Cobb, Rod Steiger. Oscar-winning blockbuster. Brando, a member of New York's corrupt longshoreman's union, defies its leaders by testifying against them after his brother is killed. MM-1000-B/W-$39.95

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